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FROM THE EDITOR

Folks, the past few months were eventful. The year 2025 ended, and a new year started with regime-orchestrated elections taking place in parts of the country. The first phase of the election took place on December 28, the second on January 11, and the final round on January 25. Alongside the pro-democracy Myanmar people, several ethnic armed groups and various international actors, including the UN special envoy, rejected these elections. News reports suggested that more than 400 individuals who expressed slight criticism or skepticism toward the elections had been arrested under the Election Protection Act. On election days, irregularities such as technical issues with voting machines and the arrival of questionable advanced ballots were reported. It is not surprising that the military-proxy party, USDP, and its allies were declared winners for the majority of the votes, even though polling stations were relatively empty. Regardless, the regime is set to convene a parliamentary session in March and form a new government in April, in accordance with the procedures of the 2008 Constitution.

While the sham election took place in peaceful-looking parts of the country, war continued to break out in several parts of the country. Resistance forces reported several advances and wins over the last quarter, but these small victories came at a price. The military responded to resistance attacks with indiscriminate airstrikes on civilians. Public hospitals in Mrauk-U and Kani were bombed in late 2025. Civilian villages were ambushed with aerial attacks at night. The famous Ngapali beach was also not spared from the regime's airstrikes. Killing and injuring hundreds of civilians, including young children. In the resistance-stronghold Sagaing Region, 90 people died due to airstrikes in December alone, proving that the regime used disproportionate force on civilians.

According to the latest report by UNOCHA published in December 2025, 16.2 million people require humanitarian assistance, and 4.1 million people are displaced from their homes. About 9500 security incidents, such as skirmishes, explosions, and violence against civilians, and about 1800 attacks on healthcare facilities and workers were reported. Meanwhile, access to

provide humanitarian assistance had been limited, especially in conflict-prone regions such as Rakhine State, Sagaing Region, and Karen and Mon states in the southeast, where humanitarian aid is most needed.

Since the civilian population and properties became collateral damage, the Ta'ang ethnic armed group TNLA retreated from key towns such as Mogok, Momeit, Hsipaw, Kyaukme and some parts of Lashio that they had seized after Operation 1027. While many viewed this as a loss for the revolution, human lives should not be the price we pay for our ultimate peace and freedom. In other news, the Spring Revolution Alliance (SRA) was formed in December 2025 with the primary aim of uniting smaller independent resistance forces spreading across the country.

Online scam hubs in border areas have also become regional threats, and therefore, governments are working in tandem to take action. In November 2025, the military conducted a publicized raid on a scam hub at the Thai-Myanmar border and arrested nearly 350 people, blaming armed groups operating in the area for protecting these sites. China and Thai authorities had also cooperated in the repatriation of alleged scam workers. Regional forums were held to discuss coordinated actions against telecom fraud and human trafficking linked with these scam hubs.

It has been five years since Min Aung Hlaing staged a coup, and people responded with anti-military resistance. At a time when the sacrifice and suffering of the people have been exponentially expanded, concrete, pragmatic, and effective leadership from the National Unity Government (NUG) is needed now more than ever. Territorial gains were reported, but the parallel government has limited resources to respond to the regime's airstrikes, resulting in civilian suffering. The less than five-year-old NUG also faces criticism for its inefficiency and allegations of internal corruption. In response, the NUG downsized its cabinets in December 2025 to create a leaner administrative body and launched internal investigations to address the alleged corruption cases.

The election is an illusion designed to deceive those who are not well-versed in our country's politics into believing that the country is en route to democracy. US government officials have fallen victim to this scheme, as it was announced that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Myanmar citizens would terminate by the end of January. The termination will strip the protection status of about 4,000 Myanmar citizens as of the November 2025 announcement.

Furthermore, public hearings on the case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) took place, in which the Gambia accused Myanmar of failing to prevent the Rohingya community from genocidal acts and to punish the perpetrators. The regime's legal council was represented by Ko Ko Hlaing, a long-time military aide and currently a minister at the regime's administrative council. The Myanmar side denied the genocidal allegations and claimed that the military operations in 2017 were conducted as counter-terrorism efforts, while the Gambia side emphasized human suffering by referencing victim testimonies. Rohingya survivors also appeared at the Court as witnesses but these sessions took place behind closed doors. Since the majority of Myanmar people have now experienced the extent of atrocities that the military is able to commit, they can now sympathize with millions

of Rohingya who fled. They also express their wish to bring the Myanmar military to international courts for its post-coup crimes.

Meanwhile, Rakhine State continued to see the ongoing conflict between the military regime and the Arakan Army (AA), which now controls most of the state. Residents in the Rakhine State, including Rohingya in the northern part and other minority groups, are also caught up in the new round of conflict. Several news reports indicated that the AA had committed human rights violations against civilians, raising further concerns for the country's westernmost state, which has not seen peace in a while.

Looking ahead, the military regime is set to monopolize the country's political landscape, deceiving the world with the sham election and instilling normalcy in areas that are still under its control, while brutally crushing the resistance forces and conducting deliberate attacks against civilians, with its two closest allies, Russia and China, by its side. In the last five years, people have suffered and lost far too much to accept the regime's gimmick. The resistance is not linear, sometimes not too pronounced, but the shared spirit to remove the military from Myanmar's politics is consistent. With this conscience, the Myanmar people continue to fight.



Mohinga Matters is an exile media platform that provides space for young people from Myanmar to share stories about politics, everyday life, and resistance following the military coup. We document key events, collect stories from all walks of life, and publish them on our website:

<https://mohingamatters.com>

January 1, 2026

The Office of the President of the National Unity Government (NUG) announced that 110 prisoners and detainees were granted unconditional amnesty to mark the New Year 2026.

The Chairman of the Chin State Council urged people to reject and collectively oppose the “fake” election results in his New Year’s message.

Following late-December talks between the military and the MNDAA in Lashio, troops reportedly withdrew from Hsipaw Bridge and the Lashio gate on the Hsipaw side.

Myanmar citizens in Japan held a peace rally in Osaka calling for peace in Myanmar.

January 5, 2026

Phase one of elections in Chin and Rakhine states concluded, with the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) reportedly winning the majority of seats.

A Chinese delegation met with the military council’s Ministry of Commerce in Nay Pyi Taw to discuss expanding bilateral trade, including reopening border gates and granting duty-free access for Myanmar goods.

In his New Year message, N’Ban La, the chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), said that he would continue working to unite revolutionary groups with shared goals.

Airstrikes hit seven townships in Sagaing Region in a single day, killing six people—including an 11-year-old child—and injuring at least 15 others, according to local sources.

An armed group identifying itself as the Kawthoolei Army (KTLA), led by Saw Ner Dah Mya as president, declared the formation of a new nation called Kawthoolei Republic along the Myanmar–Thailand border on Karen National Independence Day.

January 2, 2026

Muslim businesspeople said they were now allowed to participate in business license auctions held by the Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government (APRG), after previously being excluded under earlier administrations.

January 3, 2026

The Tagaung Nickel Plant in Tigyaing Township, Sagaing Region, has been out of operation for over a year, with both the military council and the Chinese company reportedly suffering losses of hundreds of millions of dollars. The area has been under the control of local resistance forces since July 2024.

January 6, 2026

A vehicle carrying members of the military council’s Magway Region Election Commission was attacked, killing three people—including a police chief—and injuring three others.

Fighting intensified in Sittwe Township, Rakhine State, after the Arakan Army (AA) launched a ground offensive on military council bases.

January 7, 2026

The Philippine Foreign Minister Tess Lazaro, serving as the 2026 ASEAN Chair’s Special Representative for Myanmar, visited Myanmar and met with Min Aung Hlaing.

Chin political groups said that elections were held in only two of nine townships in Chin State, with turnout estimated at 17 percent, calling the process unsuccessful.

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) warned that Karenni State is facing famine conditions as the military continues targeting civilian livelihoods and farmland.

January 8, 2026

UN Special Rapporteur for Myanmar Tom Andrews said the military council's election was not free, fair, or legitimate.

Despite reports of voting machine problems, early voting issues, and voter fraud in the first phase of the election, the military's election commission was criticized for failing to address them and instead saying improvements would be made in later phases.

The Thingangyun Township Court in Yangon sentenced People's Party candidate U Lwin Myint to one year in prison with hard labor for using political slogans referencing the "2021 Spring Revolution and Mass Uprising" during campaigning.

The Karen National Union (KNU) said that it has no connection to the Kawthoolei Army (KTLA), which declared the foundation of Kawthoolei Republic and independence along the Thai–Myanmar border.

January 10, 2026

The NUG's Interim Board for Heritage Administration designated the Myitsone region in Kachin State as a natural and cultural heritage site amid efforts by China and the military to restart the hydropower project there.

U Tin Aung San, Minister of the President Office under the military council, said the Myitsone project should not be opposed and claimed it would benefit Kachin State's development.

January 12, 2026

The Mon State Election Commission said that the Mon Unity Party (MUP) won 17 seats in various parliaments in Mon State during the second phase of the election.

January 9, 2026

Justice For Myanmar said that Facebook removed more than 1,000 pages, groups, and accounts linked to the military-owned telecom company Mytel.

The military council and Somalia signed a joint statement in Kuala Lumpur to establish diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level.

The military council reduced the requirement to convert export earnings into local currency at below-market rates from 25 percent to 15 percent starting this month.

The National Unity Government (NUG) said that it holds sole authority over Myanmar's representation in the genocide case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), rejecting the military council's representation.

The National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) urged the United States to take more effective and practical action on Myanmar.

January 11, 2026

The second phase of the election was held in 100 townships across 12 regions and states, including Kachin, Kayah (Karenni), Mon, Shan, Karen, Sagaing, Tanintharyi, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Yangon, and Ayeyarwady.

Military spokesperson General Zaw Min Tun said parliament would convene in March and a new government would take office in April.

January 13, 2026

Min Aung Hlaing claimed that the regime repaired Cyclone Mocha damage in Rakhine State within six months, and blamed the destruction on attacks by the Arakan Army (AA).

Bangladesh summoned the Myanmar military council's ambassador to protest cross-border gunfire incidents.

The military council's Labor Department announced that citizens seeking to work abroad must obtain official permission before departure starting January 14.

January 14, 2026

The military-backed Union Election Commission said that it would take action against People's Pioneer Party (PPP) chairwoman Daw Thet Thet Khaing and party members for meeting foreign embassies and organizations without permission.

In a message marking Kayah State Day, Min Aung Hlaing said that ethnic armed groups were obstructing regional stability and development.

More than 80 regime soldiers captured by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) during fighting in Lashio were reportedly released, according to local residents.

The NUG Foreign Ministry urged Myanmar nationals in Thailand not to participate in Thai political or administrative affairs and to avoid illegal activities.

January 17, 2026

In the second phase of the election, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) reportedly won 111 of 141 seats (about 80 percent) in the two national parliaments, according to the election commission.

India's Ministry of External Affairs said that it supports "inclusive and fair" elections in Myanmar involving all stakeholders.

January 19, 2026

The Philippines' Foreign Minister, representing the new ASEAN chair, reportedly discussed Myanmar issues with ethnic armed resistance groups and representatives of the National Unity Government (NUG) in Tagaytay city in the Philippines.

January 15, 2026

The participation of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) in the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) was temporarily suspended.

U Tin Hla Shwe, a member of the Township Election Commission in Chaung U Township, Sagaing Region, was reportedly arrested by local revolutionary forces four days after the second phase of the election.

January 16, 2026

The military council rejected allegations of genocide against Rohingya in its defence in the case brought by Gambia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

The military council's Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested to Timor-Leste over a January 14 meeting at the Timorese Presidential Palace involving the Chin Human Rights Organization, claiming it engaged with groups opposing the junta.

Foreign investment in Myanmar continued to decline under military rule, with only US\$333 million recorded in the first eight months of the 2025–26 fiscal year—about half of the amount during the same period the previous year.

January 20, 2026

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan said that ASEAN would not send observers to Myanmar's three-phase election and would not endorse the results.

Min Aung Hlaing said that the parliament would convene in March and that state responsibilities would be handed over to the winning government according to procedures.

January 21, 2026

An airstrike on a People's Defense Forces (PDF) office in Mawlu Township, Sagaing Region—an area under NUG control—killed four PDF members and one Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldier.

The military commission said that 404 people accused of opposing or attempting to disrupt the election were charged under the Election Protection Act, which carries long prison terms.

Vendors in parts of Yangon were reportedly threatened that if they did not vote in the third-phase of the election, they would lose permission to sell goods if they did not vote.

January 23, 2026

The U.S. Supreme Court temporarily blocked the U.S. government's move to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Myanmar nationals in the United States.

A new report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said China, Myanmar, and Israel were among the countries with the highest numbers of imprisoned journalists at the end of 2025.

January 26, 2026

Dr. Myint Htwe, former minister for the Ministry of Health and Sports under the NLD government, passed away at a hospital in Thailand. A veteran doctor and a former senior officer at WHO took the role of health minister in 2016, leading reforms in the country's healthcare sector.

January 28, 2026

As ASEAN continued urging an end to violence in Myanmar, Thailand told ASEAN foreign ministers that the bloc should engage with Myanmar's post-election government, according to the Bangkok Post.

January 22, 2026

A military airstrike on a village west of Bhamo, Kachin State, where fighting has continued for months, reportedly killed 22 civilians and injured 28 others.

People's Pioneer Party (PPP) chairwoman Daw Thet Thet Khaing was reportedly placed under house arrest for one day after being summoned for questioning by the military authorities.

To boost Russian tourism, the military council granted visa-free travel to Russian citizens and established direct flights, though only a few thousand Russian tourists visit Myanmar annually—about one percent of total foreign arrivals.

January 25, 2026

The third phase of the election was held in 63 townships, and People's Party (PP) Chairman Ko Ko Gyi was defeated.

The Kokang National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) announced the release of 500 soldiers and several detainees captured during the seizure of Lashio in northern Shan State as part of "Operation 1027."

January 27, 2026

The government of China said it supports the military's election as a path toward peace, reconciliation, political stabilization, and national stability.

The military council's Foreign Ministry announced that Pakistan and Myanmar signed a cooperation agreement covering economic and technological sectors.

The military council reportedly prevented Myanmar migrant domestic workers abroad from returning home while on leave.

January 29, 2026

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced that hearings in The Gambia's genocide case against Myanmar have concluded and that judges will now deliberate before issuing a ruling.

The Karenni Interim Executive Council apologized after more than 80 detainees—mostly prisoners of war—escaped from a prison in Mae Sae Township, Karenni State.

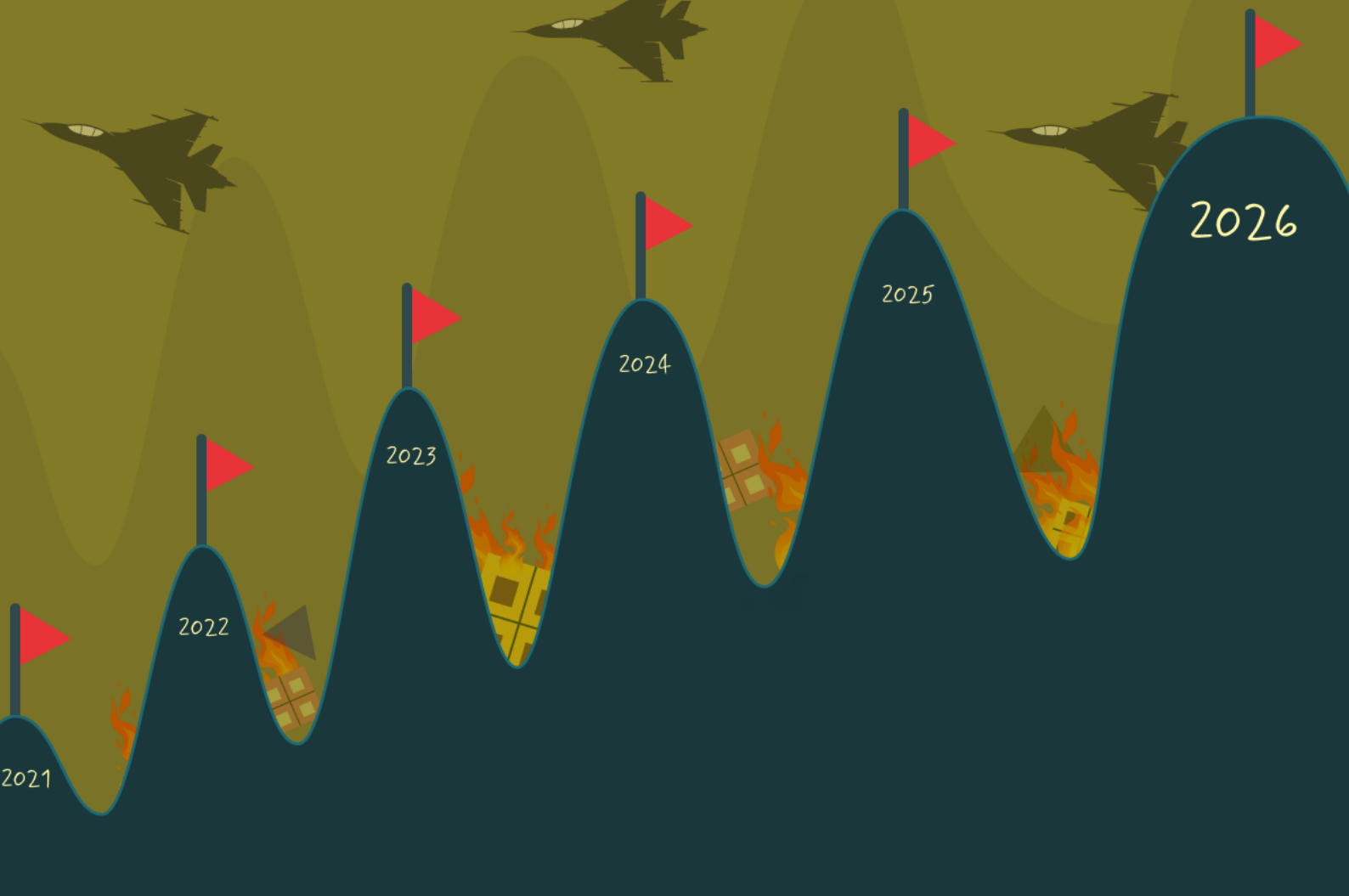
The military council extended the state of emergency for another 90 days in 63 townships where it does not have full control.

The Burma Research Institute presented a report at the U.S. Senate detailing crimes committed by the military against Christians in Myanmar from the 2021 coup through December 2025.

January 30, 2026

Japan's Foreign Minister expressed concern and regret that the military junta proceeded with elections despite international calls for the release of all detainees, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and for inclusive dialogue.





SPRING REVOLUTION FIVE YEARS ON: MOTIVATIONS, MORAL GROUNDS, AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Five years ago, Myanmar awoke to despair. With the military coup's announcement, the nation was gripped by grief and anger. Yet, the response by the people, for the people was nothing short of extraordinary. Streets across the country filled with protesters, and when those same streets ran red with their blood, an armed resistance of unprecedented scale emerged. Today, the junta's control has been reduced to a fraction of what it once was. The people's commitment and sacrifice gave hope that the long, iron grip of successive juntas might finally be broken.

However, that is only one side of the story.

Over the past five years, the junta has adapted and strengthened its hand. Militarily, it has refined its tactics and deepened alliances—most notably with China. When battlefield losses mounted at the hands of the EROs (Ethnic Re-

gional Organizations), the NUG (National Unity Government), and the PDFs (People's Defence Forces), Beijing stepped in to steady the regime and pressure resistance groups along the border. As a result, the junta, have become stronger than the revolutionary side in areas they were originally playing catch up, such as the drone warfare.

The introduction of nationwide conscription further eased its chronic manpower shortage—a constraint that once appeared decisive. From a humanitarian standpoint, these moves have been catastrophic: the conscription law triggered a mass exodus of young people, hollowing out the labor force and deepening poverty. Yet, from the junta's cold calculus, such brutality has paid off. It has enabled the regime to sustain its war effort and even recapture lost territories.

This adaptation on the junta's side has exposed the revolution's own strategic weakness. While the regime recalibrated, the opposition remained mired in moral rhetoric and reactive politics. The NUG and other revolutionary actors often responded to major developments—like the conscription law—with statements of condemnation rather than concrete counterplans. The revolution's moral clarity has never been in question; what's missing is institutional capacity and unified strategic direction.

The junta's recent "election" illustrated this gap starkly. Since the coup, it has promised a "free and fair" election under its grace to justify its seizure of power, claiming the 2021 takeover was a response to alleged voter fraud by the NLD (National League for Democracy) administration in 2020—a charge long debunked. Nevertheless, China and a handful of other neighbors signaled quiet or vocal acceptance of the junta's plans.

Faced with this, revolutionary groups primarily called for a public boycott, arguing that participating would only legitimize the regime. The slogans—"Don't legitimize the junta's killings with your vote" and "This election is a trap, not a solution"—were emotionally powerful but strategically redundant. Ordinary citizens already rejected the election as a farce, and the junta planned to declare victory regardless of turnout. The real battle was not over public participation but over international recognition. Yet, revolutionary efforts in that arena were limited, and Beijing's congratulatory message after the polls showed the cost of that neglect.

This misalignment between message and strategy has weakened the NUG's standing. Despite presenting itself as Myanmar's legitimate government, it lacks real authority over most EAOs and regional armed groups. Worse still, some of these groups see the NUG's rise as a threat and have subtly undermined it—supporting rival forces or cutting separate deals with the junta. For all its brutality, the junta still represents a single, centralized entity that China can engage with. The NUG's fragmentation and its allies' ambivalence have left the revolution vulnerable not only to the junta's repression but also to external manipulation.

What Myanmar's resistance now faces is not only a military struggle but a crisis of coordina-

Years ago, one of our articles argued that seeking global support without a clear plan was like asking for a bank loan without a business proposal. That remains true.

tion and strategic vision. Since the beginning, many have called for institution-building—developing political mechanisms that can align the interests of EAOs, the NUG, and civil resistance groups. Without that foundation, even battlefield victories risk being squandered. The recent ceasefires between the junta and forces like the MNDA (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army) and TNLA (Ta'ang National Liberation Army) in 2025 underscore how outside pressure, particularly from China, can easily divide an uncoordinated movement.

To move forward, the revolutionary camp must shift from moral performance to strategic design, with visibly enforced check-and-balance mechanisms and measurable outcomes. After five years, speaking about federal democracy as if a promised land for the faithful is losing appeal. Clear definition of what that means and how to get there are urgently needed.

Years ago, one of our articles argued that seeking global support without a clear plan was like asking for a bank loan without a business proposal. That remains true. The revolution cannot depend on moral righteousness alone; it must think like a state in the making, not a movement in survival mode.

The best time to have adopted such an approach was five years ago. We are paying for that failure now—with lives and livelihoods.

The second-best time is now.

JUNTA'S RIGGED ELECTIONS

After seizing power of the country for five years, the military leadership, led by coup leader Min Aung Hlaing, held a "nationwide" election in an attempt to legitimize its rule under the 2008 Constitution with the facade of "democracy". Several military men swapped their uniforms for civilian clothes, stripped off their ranks, and adopted the civilian prefix "U" in front of their names.

UNDER THE 2008 CONSTITUTION, THE ELECTION WAS HELD FOR

- State/Region Parliaments
- Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House)
- Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) as a part of the bicameral legislature

25% of the seats are reserved for the **military representatives**.

The public expressed **strong rejection** against the election since the last time they voted was in 2020, and the result was discarded with a military coup. Several protests, both inside and outside the country, were staged to reject the election.

The international community, including the **United Nations**, **ASEAN**, and several Western countries, condemned the election as neither free nor fair. Neither local nor international election observers came to monitor, as they considered this **a sham election that was not worth observing**.

THREE-PHASE ELECTION

PHASE 1 - 28 DECEMBER 2025

102 townships

52.1% voter turnout

PHASE 2 - 11 JANUARY 2026

100 townships

55.9% voter turnout

PHASE 3 - 25 JANUARY 2026

61 townships

56.5% voter turnout

OVERALL TURNOUT: 55%



This data was released by the regime-backed UEC, but there has been limited independent data to cross-check this data.

THE RESULTS... AS EXPECTED

Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), also known as the military proxy party, led by former military man U Khin Yi, won a **majority of the seats in the election**. Other political parties that have formed alliances with the military regime also won very few seats in the parliament.

Lower House: 232 out of 263 seats



Upper House: 109 out of 157 seats



*excluding the 25% reserved seats for the military representatives.

These results are utterly familiar to the country's political landscape between 2011-2015. Operating once again after the 2008 Constitution, former military men in civilian outfits are once again in charge of the country.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED...

Several concerns and irregularities were reported before and after the election days.

1

SURVEILLANCE

An electronic voting system was also introduced for the first time in the country's history, which raised serious concerns related to the management of voters' personal information. Personal data can be used against any individual who expresses dissent towards the military regime.

COERCION AND INTIMIDATION

Several news reports indicated that civilians including street vendors faced intimidation where the regime personnel threatened that they would face repercussions if they did not vote for the election.

2

3

INTOLERANCE TO CRITICISM

People who criticized the election faced arrest and detention under the Election Protection Law. Since the campaign period until the election, up to **400 individuals** are now facing harsh prison terms, including capital punishment.

STRATEGIC ELIMINATION OF THE OPPOSITION

The 2023 Political Parties Registration Law required strict criteria for parties to re-register, and one of the criteria was that party members must not have criminal convictions. This particular clause is strategically designed to eliminate the National League for Democracy (NLD), the leading opposition party and the rightful winner of the 2020 election. Several NLD party members, including senior leaders such as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint, have been under detention since the coup and convicted of criminal charges at the regime's kangaroo courts.

4

Daw Thet Thet Khine, leader of People's Pioneer Party and former cabinet member of the regime's State Administrative Council, was also disqualified from the contest due to her outstanding loan at a bank. She was then detained and placed under house arrest for engaging with representatives from foreign embassies.

5

ADVANCED BALLOTS

Several news reports stated that large quantities of advanced ballots were incorporated when votes were counted on election days, which **ultimately altered the number of most-voted candidates** on the election days in some cases.



A NEW ALLIANCE IN A TIRED WAR: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SRA

In December 2025, the Spring Revolution Alliance (SRA) was formed, bringing together 19 local resistance forces from across the country. Interestingly, the alliance focuses on smaller groups rather than well-known actors like the National Unity Government (NUG) forces or major Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs).

For many people, this has become a new source of hope. Recent events, including negotiations between the regime and some EROs, as well as the loss of towns previously held during Operation 1027, had left parts of the public feeling frustrated. The formation of the SRA also came just before the fifth anniversary of the military coup, at a time when morale felt low. Because of this, renewed attention has turned toward what the SRA is, and where it might be heading.

We spoke with Min Han Htet, spokesperson of the SRA and vice president of the Student Armed Force (SAF), to learn more.

In the past five years, there have been ups and downs in the armed resistance. People have also felt frustrated by the prolonged war. Just before the fifth anniversary of the coup, the SRA was formed. How has the reaction been so far?

We officially announced the formation of the SRA in December 2025. The reaction from resistance armed groups and from the public has been extremely positive; honestly, beyond our expectations. That response shows a real sense of unity and public support.

But this is only the beginning. We have just started. The SRA has not yet coordinated any major offensives as a unified force. So far, we have been able to organize battles here and there in different regions. What we really want is to prepare for long-term, coordinated operations as a collective force. That takes time. We will move carefully, prepare properly, and launch operations as the SRA when we are ready.

Regarding the frustration. From 2021 until now, the Spring Revolution has reached the highest level of armed resistance in our history. This is not just about one political party or one armed force. Every stakeholder, armed groups, civilians, everyone involved, is contributing at an unprecedented level.

If we look back at previous revolutionary movements, there were compromises and pauses. But this time is different. The goal is to end military dictatorship once and for all. That means there is no turning back to things like ceasefires, peace talks, or empty dialogues. There is no U-turn now.

The formation of the SRA is meant to support the resistance until the very end. It's like building a boat; we have to keep strengthening it and increasing its capacity. We are not saying that the revolution will win in 2026 because the SRA was formed. We don't know how long it will take. We will keep fighting for as long as necessary.

There are no large, well-known EROs or groups like the NUG directly under the SRA. How do you plan to work with them?

From day one, our goal has been to unite the scattered armed groups that emerged from the Spring Revolution and are not under the NUG or any specific ERO structure. Our aim is not to absorb the NUG or EROs into the SRA, but to collaborate with them.

In the long term, we plan to continue this approach; bringing together scattered groups across the country. Right now, we have 19 forces in the SRA, and we are still in talks with more.

We don't just want to talk about unity; we want to demonstrate it on the ground. It's important for the international community to see that.

With so many different resistance groups today, how can they gain international support and recognition?

International support and recognition are very important. The NUG is leading many of these efforts internationally. We have seen both successes and obstacles in that process.

From the outside, the international community sometimes sees the resistance as fragmented, disorganized, and lacking central coordination. They worry that without a common structure, groups might even end up fighting each other. We are aware of these concerns.

One purpose of the SRA is to show unity and change that perception. We don't just want to talk about unity; we want to demonstrate it on the ground. It's important for the international community to see that.

Of course, we have to fight our own battle. No one else will fight for us. But international recognition still matters, and to gain that, we must prove that we are united.

Do you see a difference between online public support and support on the ground?

We now have 19 forces, and each of them has support in their own regions and territories. So in that sense, there is already local public support.

At the same time, we haven't carried out many activities specifically under the SRA name yet, so the public may not know us as "SRA." But they do know the individual groups that are part of it.

I also want to stress something important. People are supporting the idea of the SRA and celebrating its creation, and that's encouraging. But we must not let that support spoil us. Applause is a welcome gesture, but during real operations we could make mistakes and face criticism too.

We cannot turn around later and say, "You supported us before, so you can't criticize us now." We must not be spoiled by praise, and we must not be crushed by criticism either. We need to grow thick skin for both.

So while public love for resistance soldiers is beautiful, it must not lead to impunity.

How do you feel about the current level of engagement between armed forces and the public?

We often use the phrase “for the people, by the people.” But we need to seriously ask ourselves whether we are truly engaging with the public at that level. This is a question for all armed groups.

We saw strong public participation during the CDM movement, mass protests and early battles. Now that the conflict has spread across the country, we must make sure we still truly represent the will of the people.

Sometimes we end up putting the public in the role of spectators. We ask them for rice, shelter, or donations, and they praise us when we succeed. That is not enough. We must actively invite feedback from the public and make sure we stay aligned with them.

In some cases, armed groups tell people, “This is not your business, we will handle it.” But that is the same mindset the military regime used. We experienced that ourselves as university students when we were told to just study and stay out of politics. We don’t want to repeat that. The public must be informed and allowed to criticize us.

I have worked in operational areas in Anyar. People there love us. We are in uniform fighting the military, and they don’t care which group we belong to. They support us all the same. But even that kind of love should come with honest feedback.

In the past, soldiers were also admired during the independence struggle. That admiration was later exploited by successive military regimes and contributed to the situation we are in today. So while public love for resistance soldiers is beautiful, it must not lead to impunity.

People must hold all armed groups accountable and point out what is going wrong. Once in Sagaing Region, I asked local people to keep us on the right path and criticize us when needed. They were shocked; they were not used to an armed person asking to be held accountable. But if we open that space, I believe people will speak up. Their opinions may differ from ours but they must be heard.

As someone familiar with democratic practices since university days, how should democracy be applied among revolutionary forces and administrations?

Democratic practices are essential within the resistance. There are cases where people are unhappy with local administrations or even with the NUG, and we have seen protests about that. We should address those concerns through democratic values and processes.

At the beginning of the Spring Revolution, many administrative roles were taken by elected representatives from the 2020 election. That made sense at the time. But after years of resistance, in some areas we should begin building more localized democratic governance.

We are already seeing this in some townships, for example in Magway. Starting from the village level, then moving up to townships and states, people can elect their own representatives. That way, the government and the people stay aligned.

If we can say that every level of governance in

Without the coup, we might not have faced such extreme suffering but we also might not have had the chance to challenge the system so deeply, including the military’s guaranteed power in politics.

liberated areas is democratically elected, that would greatly strengthen our legitimacy.

As a former student union leader, do you think more leaders will emerge from students who are still attending school under the military system? Can they still be organized and engaged?

At the beginning, attending schools under the regime was very controversial, and students faced social punishment. But that perception has softened over time.

Historically, many resistance movements in Myanmar have grown out of universities. Campuses are places where fresh ideas and new thinking emerge. We should not abandon today's students or see them as enemies. We should keep the door open for dialogue and possible collaboration.

We also have to remember that Myanmar's education system has been weak for decades. Even when the NLD was in power from 2015 to 2020, change did not happen overnight. Reform takes years.

Now, schools are under military control, but that doesn't automatically mean students are lost or that education is worthless. We should not judge students just because they are still in school. We must keep an open mind and find ways to collaborate with civilians, including students.

Personally, I haven't been able to focus much on engaging with current students because I've been busy with armed operations. But I encourage those who can do that work to continue.

In earlier speeches, you said that we need to instill fear in the military. Many people believe that fear already exists today. What should the next step be?

When I first said that, I received a lot of criticism. At the time, many people still believed soldiers and police could be persuaded to join the people's side.

But from early on, I understood that the military leadership was determined to crush anyone in their way. The system runs heavily on incen-

tives such as promotions, benefits, and a better life for those inside it. I believed the military would weaken only if it could no longer provide those incentives, or if its troops became afraid to fight.

We are now seeing signs of such fear. Some battalions have surrendered, individuals have defected, and morale has declined. But the military still has massive firepower; air power, heavy weapons, naval forces, technology, and manpower. They are also using conscription to replace troop losses. Instead of careful strategy, they often rely on overwhelming firepower to control territory.

At the same time, we know many soldiers are afraid to face resistance forces. Just hearing names like the PDFs or the Arakan Army (AA) can frighten them. As the SRA, we also need to build that kind of reputation. Across the resistance, we must grow strong enough to shake their confidence. We also need to target the regime's ability to produce and sustain its weapons and firepower.

So yes, fear already exists within the military. The next step is to deepen that fear, take advantage of it, and weaken all the pillars that support the military system.

Anything you would like to add?

The road ahead will be very difficult. Things may get worse before they get better. People are holding on but I understand this struggle is exhausting.

This is the highest level of resistance in our history. If we don't succeed now, the military could dominate the country for generations.

Without the coup, we might not have faced such extreme suffering but we also might not have had the chance to challenge the system so deeply, including the military's guaranteed power in politics. So we have to see this moment as both a crisis and an opportunity.

We need to stay united and get through this together.

Tea Shop

*The tea shop awakens before its neighbours
The smell of dawn is cold and peppered
Plastic chairs stacked, unstacked, restacked
Sweeping yesterday into neat little piles:
collect and scrap*

*The owner boils and pours
Boils and pours
Tea leaves bounce and wither
Loosened, let to slither*

*The radio says the people have spoken
No one argues the claim
Truth is not served here,
It thinned out in the drain*

*The tea comes out hot and bitter
Burns the tongue of the drinker
A man asks for less sugar
The owner pours another*

*No one asks for the names of the runners
Nor the counters
Those questions belong to a different order*

*The ballot changes nothing
The kettle changes water
Only one is honest about what it's after*

*We drink.
We pay.
We leave exact change.*

*They offer a trembling facade,
The tea shop offers tea.
We know which one
will still be here
tomorrow morning.*

-Pearl





NO ENDING IN SIGHT: MYANMAR'S WAR OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is escalating globally. A confluence of factors, including the ascent of far-right ideologies, increased militarization, ongoing wars, and the misuse of advanced technology, has led to a severe decline in protections for women and girls. This disturbing trend manifests in contexts ranging from digital spaces to national policy. On Elon Musk's platform X, the AI chatbot Grok faced [widespread criticism](#) for generating non-consensual sexualized imagery, contributing to an environment where 1.8 million such images flooded the site in just nine days. Concurrently, in the United States under Trump, there has been a systematic erosion of fundamental rights for women and girls, exemplified by the removal of the foundational concept of "women's rights as human rights" from an official [annual report](#). Furthermore, the US's [retreat from](#) international organizations and its reduction of funding for global commitments undermine mechanisms for peace and accountability, disproportionate-

ly endangering women and children caught in violence and conflict.

Global statistics underscore the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence on women and girls. A [report](#) from the World Health Organization reveals that nearly one in three women worldwide—approximately 840 million—has suffered physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or other perpetrator in her lifetime, a rate stubbornly unchanged since 2000. In the past year alone, 316 million women (11% of those aged 15 and older) endured such violence from an intimate partner. Progress in curbing intimate partner violence has been negligible, with an annual decline of just 0.2% over the last twenty years.

The surge in global conflicts has precipitated a parallel rise in sexual violence against women. Last year's UN Secretary-General's [16th report](#) on conflict-related sexual violence document-

While the junta's soldiers, and its ally Pyu Saw Htee militia, remain the overwhelming perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls, cases have also been committed by other male civilians and members of Local Defense Forces (LDF) and People's Defense Forces (PDF).

ed a shocking 25% year-on-year increase. The preceding [15th report](#) detailed that women and girls bear the overwhelming brunt of this violence, constituting over 95% of the 3,622 UN-verified cases. Of the 1,186 cases where children were victimized, girls accounted for 1,157 (98%). While men and boys are also targeted, representing 145 cases (4%), and LGBTIQ+ individuals suffered in 21 cases, the violence remains overwhelmingly gendered.

The UN defines “conflict-related sexual violence” as encompassing rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and other grave forms of sexual violence linked directly or indirectly to conflict, affecting all genders. Despite this broad definition, the scale of violence against women and children in Myanmar remains critically underreported due to the extensive and pervasive nature of the atrocities occurring nationwide.

Myanmar Military's Use of Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

The Myanmar military has systematically employed sexual violence as a tactic of war. Even

before the 2021 coup, the country's protracted civil war was marked by a [long history of such atrocities](#) against women and girls. The military forces, including Myanmar Armed Forces soldiers, military intelligence officers, pro-military militias (Pyu Saw Htee), [continue to](#) commit sexual violence with entrenched patterns of historic military abuse. Among them, “Ogre Column” is notorious for its brutality in Sagaing. This can be divided into the course carried out during the ground operations and during the interrogation and detention as the key findings from Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) stated. The military is infamous for using rape and gang-rape as calculated political weapons to terrorize ethnic communities, dismantle social structures, and consolidate control over resource-rich territories. The conflict's intensification following the February 2021 coup has drastically worsened this crisis.

As recently as January 2026, local news agency Khit Thit Media reported that army soldiers gang-raped nine women on January 6 in Wetlat town, Sagaing, and forced a contraceptive injection on them upon release. Despite some women's rights groups campaigning to protect women from violence, the very limited number of reported cases shows that women in Myanmar have continuously been targeted for gender-based violence in the country's patriarchal society. The recent news of a homicide committed through intimate partner violence in Hmawbi township, Yangon mid-January, was widely circulated among Myanmar social media users, drawing attention to violence against women that was previously tolerated by society.

The UN Secretary-General's [16th report](#) confirms that the Myanmar armed forces are the primary perpetrators of sexual violence, targeting individuals of all genders and sexual identities at checkpoints, in detention, and in fields and displacement camps. In regions plagued by intensified conflict and deepening poverty, the risks of trafficking, sexual slavery, and forced marriage have increased. Detainees report sexual violence being used as a tool for interrogation and punishment. Furthermore, rape and gang rape are documented as deliberate strategies to terrorize civilians and retaliate against perceived support for democracy. During military operations, women are subjected to rape and murder, often in front of family members, with victims' bodies sometimes found mutilat-

ed. These acts constitute war crimes intended to punish, terrorize, and target individuals based on gender, ethnicity, religion, politics, or sexual identity.

[Data](#) from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) covering nearly five years post-coup (Feb 2021–Dec 2025) indicates that of 7,640 identifiable victims killed by the junta, 1,986 were women, including 373 girls under 18. Among 30,216 political arrests, about (6,222) are women, with 173 killed after detention—some following sexual violence. The Women's League of Burma (WLB) and its network have documented over [900 cases](#) of violence against women, including conflict-related sexual violence. Groups like the WLB, Karen Women's Organisation, Kachin Women's Organisation, and Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) have catalogued reports since 2002. [The true scale](#) is undoubtedly far greater due to fear, stigma, and reporting barriers. In the earlier report published in 2024, WLB [reported](#) over 80% of documented cases originate in conflict zones like Sagaing, Shan, Kachin, Karenni, and Karen States, and over 50 detained women activists have reported rape and assault in prisons across Yangon, Mandalay, and Bago.

A 2022 [BBC report](#) featured a soldier's confession that troops were permitted to sexually abuse captured women "as they wished," a claim corroborated by [AAPP](#) testimonies describing a military culture of ownership over women's bodies. Research by Columbia Law School's Security Force Monitor, reported by The [Guardian](#) in 2023, identified 64% (51 of 79) of Myanmar's senior military commanders as responsible for war crimes, including rape. This reflects an entrenched culture of impunity. As a 2017 Human Rights Watch report concluded, security forces have raped and assaulted countless women and girls during village attacks, with uniformed military personnel being the perpetrators in ev-

ery documented case.

Alarming concerns on All Sides

While the junta's soldiers, and its ally Pyu Saw Htee militia, remain the overwhelming perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls, acting with long-entrenched impunity and using such violence as a deliberate tool of terror and punishment, cases have also been committed by other male civilians and members of Local Defense Forces (LDF) and People's Defense Forces (PDF). The collapse of law and proper judicial accountability [since the coup](#) means women are no longer protected by state institutions or a legal system committed to international law.

Although reporting mechanisms exist through the National Unity Government (NUG), their effectiveness has been called into question. This is evidenced by the unresolved case of [a five-year-old victim](#) in Mae Sot, a town near Thai-Myanmar border, where the alleged perpetrator is a former member of the National League for Democracy, and by the sexual harassment of an [NUG member in India](#). Justice for the five-year-old remains elusive as the alleged perpetrator remains at large. Similarly, cases such as the rape of a [non-CDM woman](#) and other female detainees in Kantbalu township by PDF members have resulted only in the perpetrators' dismissal from their forces, not in formal justice. The rape and killing of women detainees, including underage girls, in [Chaung-U township](#), Sagaing, on the pretext of their being 'Dalans' (spies) is another alarming example.

Although these crimes by anti-junta forces appear opportunistic and self-motivated, rather than systematic policy, women and girls are increasingly becoming victims of conflict-related sexual violence across all sides of the conflict.

FIVE YEARS OF MILITARY CONTROL

Five years after the coup, the military's grip on the country tells two different stories. On paper, elections are staged and authority is claimed. On the ground, control is uneven and constantly contested, sustained through air power, arrests, and the steady pressure placed on civilian life.

That contrast becomes most visible when looking at where the military was able to carry out its recent election.

On official maps, polling stations suggest reach and administration. But the geography of where voting could not take place tells a different story; one of contested control, shifting frontlines, and areas where resistance remains strong enough to prevent the performance of normalcy.

**THIS MAP IS LESS ABOUT BALLOTS THAN ABOUT BOUNDARIES:
WHERE AUTHORITY CAN BE STAGED, AND WHERE IT CANNOT.**

■ Polling areas ■ Non-polling areas

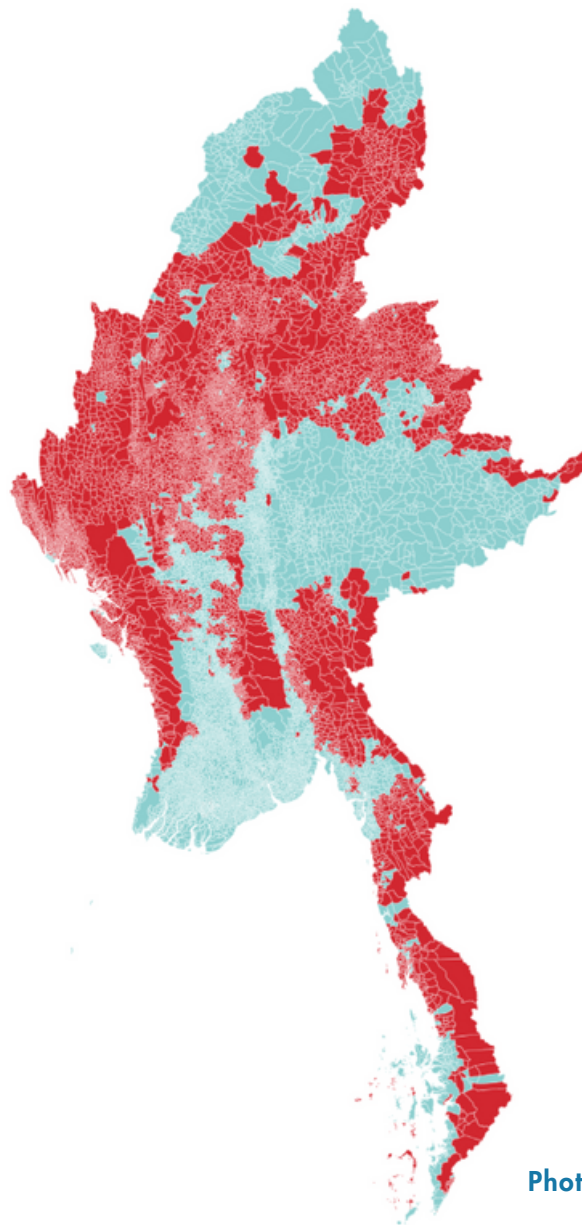
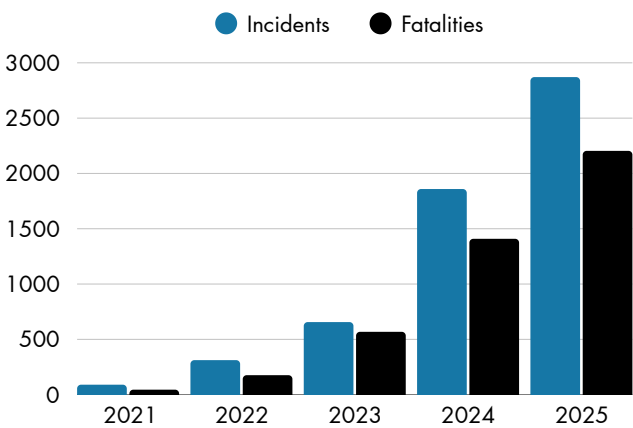


Photo Credit: DVB

FIVE YEARS OF VIOLENCE

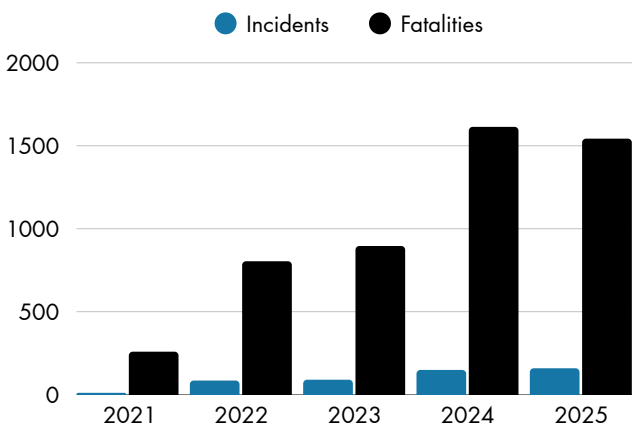
THE GROWING FREQUENCY OF AIRSTRIKES HIGHLIGHTS A SHIFT TOWARD REMOTE FORMS OF FORCE, WHERE CONTROL OF TERRITORY IS REPLACED BY CONTROL OF THE SKY.



As territorial control has shifted, the nature of violence has also changed. Ground clashes and localized fighting have increasingly given way to more remote forms of force. Airstrikes, artillery, and long-range attacks have expanded the reach of the conflict far beyond active frontlines.

A total of **4,638 deaths** caused by airstrikes have been recorded in five years.

THE DATA SHOWS A SUSTAINED PATTERN OF MASS-CASUALTY INCIDENTS OVER TIME, INDICATING THAT LARGE-SCALE VIOLENCE HAS BECOME A RECURRING FEATURE OF THE CONFLICT RATHER THAN AN EXCEPTION.



At the same time, civilians in areas associated with strong resistance activity have faced growing levels of harm, with repeated large-scale attacks affecting entire communities. These patterns point to violence that not only targets armed actors, but also reshapes the relationship between resistance groups and the populations living around them.

About **5,180 individuals were killed** in various incidents of mass killings by the regime soldiers in five years.

INFRASTRUCTURE DESTROYED BY AIRSTRIKES



TOTAL AIRSTRIKES:

9,088



HOSPITALS/CLINICS:

144



SCHOOLS:

432



RELIGIOUS SITES:

650

Sources: MOHR, NUG

FIVE YEARS OF DESTRUCTION

FIVE YEARS UNDER MILITARY RULE HAVE LEFT A TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION. EACH FIGURE REPRESENTS SOMETHING TAKEN FROM THE PEOPLE OF MYANMAR — A LIFE, A HOME, OR A FUTURE.

CASUALTY & DETENTION

7,738

TOTAL DEATHS

30,357

TOTAL ARRESTED

4,500

UNVERIFIED DEATHS

22,767

STILL DETAINED

2,033

FEMALE DEATHS

6,249

FEMALE DETAINEES

1,001

CHILDREN DEATHS

631

CHILDREN DETAINEES

Source: AAPP



JOURNALISTS ARRESTED: 200+

JOURNALISTS STILL DETAINED: 51



TOWNSHIPS EXPERIENCING PHONE
& INTERNET BLACKOUTS: 130

Sources: RSF, ATHAN

DISPLACEMENT & OTHER VIOLATIONS

ESTIMATED MYANMAR
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM
SEEKERS



1,596,600

STATELESS FROM MYANMAR
(ROHINGYA REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-
SEEKERS)



1,301,401

ARRESTS RELATED TO
CONSCRIPTION LAW:



77,000

Sources: UNHCR, BACS

TO OUR READERS

Folks, Mohinga Matters was started in 2018 as a platform to amplify voices of local youths in Yangon. We wrote anecdotes about our lives in the city that boomed with the country's transition to "democracy", our perspectives on how our lives had transformed with new opportunities flowing in, our frustration with challenges that came with a new political system or our concerns with the way our city was shifting in the name of development. On a small shared space on the world wide web, we exercised our rights to freedom of speech on a small space that came in the form of a dot-com. Until the first of February came in 2021 when the very right was criminalized.

Folks who have been following us since our early days know that our writing took a dramatic turn after the military coup with our daily reports for one full year, reporting what had been going on in our country. In retrospect, we could not comprehend how we managed writing and publishing daily but we knew in our hearts that we wanted to contribute to the anti-military revolution in any capacity. We then reduced our reporting to weekly reports and monthly magazines as our team members spread across the globe, navigating our livelihood while staying committed to the cause. By the end of 2024, our weekly reporting came to an end and we scaled down our publications to quarterly magazines in the past year. However, we also published longform reporting of issues that were often neglected in the time of conflict. Notably, we published a photo essay on the 2025 earthquake in Sagaing, showcasing powerful images of devastation from the ground. In addition to our usual text-based stories, we also produced graphic novels and animated series, telling our stories and struggles in different media formats.

Time has passed by so quickly that it is shocking to realize it has been five years since we have been on this journey. All these while, we have received both tangible and intangible support from various people and partners, ensuring that we could do whatever we wanted to do with our projects. This support opened the doors for us to do things that we had only imagined five years ago, and for that we are forever grateful.

After serious deliberation and contemplation, we decided to conclude our reporting on the post-coup development and this publication would be our final magazine issue. But the end of the magazines does not mean the end of our stories. As a group of opinionated individuals with itchy fingertips on our keyboards, we will always be writing stories. However, to continue doing these things that we enjoy so much with fresh ideas and full energy, we need to take some time to recharge and process. So, thank you for all the love and support. Our website remains active, archiving all our stories, timelines and updates. Take a peek at it sometimes, we might have something new...

– the editorial team