

Status of Human Rights and Sanctions in Myanmar

APRIL 2013 REPORT

This report seeks to provide an overview of the developments in April 2013 that relate to the status of human rights in Myanmar. It also reviews the response of the international community to Myanmar's reform efforts.

1. International Community and Sanctions	2
2. Civil, Political and Social Rights	2
A. Election-Related Laws and Acts	2
B. Press and Media Laws/Restrictions	2
C. Official Corruption.....	3
D. Workers' Rights.....	3
3. Political Prisoners	3
4. Economic Development	4
A. Developments in the Legal Framework of Economic Development.....	4
B. Developments in Foreign Investment and Economic Development Projects.....	4
C. Land Seizures.....	4
5. Ethnic Violence.....	5
A. Kachin.....	5
B. Violence against Muslims.....	5
1. Yangon.....	5
2. Rakhine.....	5
3. Indonesian Refugee Camp.....	5
C. Allegations of Ethnic Cleansing	5
D. Karen - Aftermaths of Ethnic Violence	5

1. International Community and Sanctions

European Union foreign ministers permanently ended sanctions against Myanmar on April 23, 2013. EU ministers meeting in Luxembourg unanimously endorsed removing the sanctions. But the arms embargo will remain in place and be reviewed after another year.ⁱ The EU lifted its sanctions a year after suspending them in response to a dramatic series of reforms put in place since Myanmar's military stepped aside and a quasi-civilian government was installed in 2011. "In response to the changes that have taken place and in the expectation that they will continue, the council (EU governments) has decided to lift all sanctions with the exception of the embargo on arms," EU foreign ministers said in a statement after a meeting in Luxembourg.ⁱⁱ

The EU has been trying to calibrate its response to Myanmar's unfolding changes, announcing a €150 million aid and development package last year. The bloc also opened an office in Yangon, last April, and Thein Sein recently visited Brussels, where he encouraged EU leaders to lift all sanctions. EU officials have also proposed allowing Myanmar goods duty-free and quota-free access to the European market.ⁱⁱⁱ

The United States is reviewing trade relations with Myanmar in a move that could end import duties on thousands of goods from the Southeast Asian country, which Acting U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis visited at the end of this month. The U.S. Trade Representative's office initiated the review, which could add Myanmar to the Generalized System of Preferences program, which provides duty-free treatment for up to 5,000 goods from 128 countries and territories.^{iv}

The US government revoked Myanmar's GSP privileges in 1989 over concerns about the military regime's use of forced labor and labor rights. And Marantis expects tough questions from members of Congress.^v

Many human rights and governance observers say the quick ramp-up in Western engagement is too much of a reward, too soon. Just as Myanmar scored huge economic victories this month, international nonprofit Human Rights Watch threw allegations of "ethnic cleansing" at the government, saying it was complicit last year in reported massacres of the Rohingya. "The EU's scrapping of targeted sanctions on Myanmar is premature and recklessly imperils human rights gains made so far," Lotte Leicht, EU director at Human Rights Watch, said in an April 22 statement. "EU member states are ditching measures that have motivated the current progress and gambling on the good will of Myanmar's government and military to keep their word to keep reforms on track."^{vi} But the US ambassador here, Derek Mitchell, argues that helping Myanmar's economy through programs like trade preferences is key to prodding along other reforms. "In fact, the ability to engage economically and provide opportunity, provide jobs, provide development is essential to the success of reform – broader reform, political reform, social reform – not just economics," he says.^{vii}

2. Civil, Political and Social Rights

A. Election-Related Laws and Acts

Union Election Commission officials vowed to hold free, fair and transparent general elections in 2015 in an April meeting with political parties, civil society organizations and United Nations representatives.^{viii} Specific reforms will include increasing time for campaigning and

providing education to voters, particularly ethnic minorities in their native languages, according to commission chairman U Tin Aye and other officials.^{ix} Tin Aye also stated that the commission will correct voting rolls and ensure only those eligible cast advance votes.^x In the past, some candidates have received a grossly disproportionate number of advance votes, raising doubts about legitimacy.^{xi} However, Tin Aye also warned political parties that their licenses would be revoked if they accepted foreign financial support.^{xii} Minority parties have called for further reforms, including a reduction in candidate registration fees^{xiii} and advanced publication of voting lists,^{xiv} among other reforms.

Separately, representatives of 56 minority parties met with U Tin Aye on April 8, 2013 to discuss voting systems. At issue was whether to retain Myanmar's first-past-the-post ("FPTP") voting system, in which the party with the largest number of votes wins almost all the seats available, or change to a proportional representation ("PR") system, in which parties are allocated parliamentary seats according to the proportion of votes they receive.^{xv} FPTP voting tends to engender two-party political systems as voters vote strategically for parties most likely to capture a majority, whereas PR tends to produce coalition governments where it is difficult for a single party to obtain an absolute majority.

In the April 8th meeting, many small political parties supported a PR system, which would give minority groups individualized voices in parliament. However, the leading minority party National League of Democracy ("NLD") is against PR.^{xvi} FPTP will likely result in a two-horse race between NLD and the majority Union Solidarity and Democracy Party ("USDP"),^{xvii} and it is possible that NLD will win future elections in a landslide with FPTP voting.^{xviii} Critics charge that such an outcome could further marginalize Myanmar's ethnic minorities, which would continue to struggle obtaining representation in parliament.^{xix} Interestingly, critics speculate that the USDP, like many small minority parties, would also support a change to PR, since the majority party stands to lose a large number of seats to NLD under FPTP voting.^{xx} The election commission plans to submit a bill on the issue to parliament in June 2013.^{xxi} However, U Tin Aye stated that it is unlikely any change to PR would be implemented for the 2015 general election because educating voters about the change would take time.^{xxii}

During a visit to the United Nations, a minister of President Thein Sein stated that Myanmar will amend its Constitution to allow Aung San Suu Kyi to run in the next presidential election.^{xxiii} The current constitution, adopted in 2008, bars Myanmar citizens from running for president or vice president if they have a spouse or child who is a foreign citizen. Suu Kyi was married to the late Michael Aris, a British academic, and they have two sons who are British citizens. However, the Vice-Chairman of the majority party since denied that the party sought to change the provision.^{xxiv}

B. Press and Media Laws/Restrictions

In our March report, we discussed a bill that would bar publishers from printing articles that oppose and violate the military-drafted 2008 constitution and articles that could undermine “law and order and incite unrest.” Complaints from NGOs and media groups led the government to suspend discussions on the bill. In a positive development, the Ministry of Information submitted the bill to UNESCO, which has convened a forum to revise the draft and provide technical support.^{xxv} The revisions will include emphasizing freedom of expression as a prominent intent of the law, deleting vague provisions, deleting a provision on “Invalid Publications,” rewriting provisions to make them consistent with international standards and giving jurisdiction as to the law’s violations to the courts, rather than registration officers as in the original bill.^{xxvi}

On April 25, 2013, Government officials conferenced with ethnic minority journalists to discuss the development of ethnic media. During the military junta, ethnic minority journalists largely fled Myanmar and broadcast from neighboring countries. Government ministers stated in the conference that the current administration supports the broadcast and publication of media in ethnic languages.^{xxvii} Ethnic media organizations are beginning to move back into the country.^{xxviii} However, despite the public overtures by government officials, ethnic media groups say their voice is being ignored in the drafting of the media bill, and they recently released a statement asking to be included in the drafting.^{xxix}

Myanmar enjoyed a milestone in its reform on April 1, 2013 when private newspapers began publishing daily papers for the first time since 1964, when private dailies were shut down by the government. Sales were reportedly strong,^{xxx} but there are concerns about the ability of private dailies to compete with better-funded government-owned papers.^{xxxi} Sixteen papers obtained licenses to publish dailies but only four were ready to begin publishing on April 1, 2013.^{xxxii} According to the editor of one private newspaper, “the government granted licenses much earlier than we expected and we were caught by surprise.” Information Minister U Aung Kyi stated that the government will “continue permitting (dailies to open) every month if we receive more applications.”

Despite incremental advances in press freedom, critics charge that journalists are still silenced. Criticism of current and past military leaders is still considered taboo, according to Aye Chan Naing, the editor-in-chief of the Democratic Voice of Burma, in a Southeast Asian conference on journalism. “There are no laws saying that you can’t criticize them, but nobody dares to,” said Aye Chan Naing.^{xxxiii}

C. Official Corruption

On April 19, 2013, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry released the 2012 Human Rights Report. In his remarks on the report, he reported that Myanmar must root out corruption in order to grow and develop. “Has [Myanmar] reached where we want it to be?” Kerry asked. “No. But it’s on the road. It’s moving.”^{xxxiv} In the month of April, the Myanmar government took major steps to reduce the country’s rampant corruption, but significant incidents of corruption continued to be reported.

On March 29, 2013, six key leading officials in the Ministry of Finance and Revenue, the Trade Department, the Department of National Economic Planning and Development and the Commerce Department were forced to retire by a presidential order because of mismanagement or corruption. The President’s Office reported that they had “received public complaint letters related to mismanagement and bribery cases, and an investigation followed.”^{xxxv}

Myanmar is receiving help from Australian government lawyers to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (“EITI”). The EITI is a Norway-based agency that sets stringent requirements for financial transparency, environmental standards, and corporate governance.^{xxxvi} Please refer to Section 4.A below for a further discussion of the EITI.

Despite steps towards progress, corruption is still a significant part of the Myanmar landscape. On April 18, 2013, hundreds of people gathered outside the local offices of the China National Petroleum Corporation (“CNPC”) to protest that state-owned CNPC and its partners, including the Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise, have not paid them in full for land in the Kyaukphyu district of Arakan State, which was expropriated for a pipeline. CNPC claims to have paid the agreed compensation in full, but protestors claim the money has gone elsewhere.^{xxxvii}

In late April 2013, corruption shrouded a government program to make 350,000 low cost SIM cards available to citizens. The government had previously kept tight restrictions on the sale of SIM cards, which were priced as high as \$3000 in the past, falling in recent years to around \$250. Only 5 to 10% of the population has mobile phone subscriptions. Due the high demand for the low-priced SIM cards, local municipalities organized public lotteries to determine which citizens would receive the opportunity to purchase the cards.^{xxxviii} Residents of one Yangon district filed a complaint alleging that their ward administrator rigged the draw to ensure his relatives were selected.^{xxxix}

D. Workers’ Rights

A year after the enactment of Myanmar’s labor organization and freedom of association laws, local and international workers’ rights activists say more must be done to support the newfound freedoms in practice. Addressing a forum of several hundred trade union leaders and labor activists in Yangon on Monday, International Labor Organization (ILO) Deputy Director-General Gregory Vines said that although the passing of the new laws and the revival of Myanmar’s long-suppressed labor movement was positive, he added that “there have been some issues around the laws and their enforcement.”^{xl}

US Ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell referenced reports of workers being fired after joining unions — a signal, he said, that “there is a long way to go to realize in fact the promise now on paper.” The ambassador acknowledged, however, that the staging of a large gathering of workers’ rights representatives was a sign that Myanmar is making progress on labor issues. “It is only a year ago that the labor law was passed and labor organizations began to form,” Mitchell said, adding that the labor movement “has come a long way” over the past 12 months.^{xli}

3. Political Prisoners

This month, Myanmar’s president pardoned approximately 100 prisoners, including at least 56 political detainees, just one day after the European Union lifted sanctions against the Southeast Asian nation.^{xlii} Announced on April 23, 2013, the pardons were granted amid renewed calls for the Myanmar government to release hundreds more political prisoners still believed to be behind bars.^{xliii}

Historically, Myanmar has denied the existence of political prisoners, maintaining that all people sentenced to jail have been convicted of legitimate illegal acts.^{xliv} Nevertheless, more than 800 political prisoners have been freed in amnesties between May 2011 and November 2012.^{xlv}

For the most recent pardoning of prisoners, Bo Kyi, of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (“AAPP”), confirmed that 56 of the released were political detainees from five different jails and estimated that approximately 176 political prisoners remain in detention.^{xlvi}

One of those freed, activist Zaw Moe, told reporters that the releases were linked to the EU’s lifting of sanctions on Myanmar.^{xlvii} Others have speculated that the release could have also been linked to the onset of the Burmese New Year.^{xlviii}

Bo Kyi of the AAPP welcomed the release of the prisoners but questioned the motives and “said [the government] had failed to implement the decision properly. ‘The release of the political prisoners should be publicly announced. The government should treat them with dignity,’ he said. ‘They are somewhat like bargaining chips, used by the government to gain some achievements’ from the international community.”^{xlix}

4. Economic Development

A. Developments in the Legal Framework of Economic Development

The last month has seen developments in monetary policy, fiscal policy, and corporate policy all reflecting Myanmar’s development of a modern administrative state focused on efficiently working with the private sector. Senior officials tackled issues related to tax reform at an April 9, 2013 meeting that included Aung San Suu Kyi, other parliamentarians, and business leaders, including the head of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).¹ The event focused on discussions of tax reforms and improving citizens’ knowledge of tax issues, as well as ensuring appropriate parliamentary input into taxation decisions.ⁱⁱ The Internal Revenue Department noted that, pursuant to suggestions from international financial institutions, it plans to implement a self-assessment system, value-added tax or a goods and services tax instead of levying commercial tax.ⁱⁱⁱ

Reforms of the tax system are necessary according to Myanmar business leaders. U Myint Soe, Chairman of the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association, said “taxation needs to be easy to understand and clear.”^{liii} He also stated, “If citizens find it hard to follow the law, then the government needs to change it. I would like to suggest that taxpayers should be given ID numbers, which respects their dignity and helps the government to gather more revenue.”^{liv} Dr. Win Myint, secretary of the Myanmar Petroleum Trade Association, noted his concerns about tax evasion: “I have heard that up to 80% of people in the trading business don’t pay any tax – that’s a serious leakage of potential revenue.”^{lv}

With respect to monetary policy, in June Myanmar’s parliament is set to review the draft Central Bank Law returned to it by President Thein Sein’s office which will provide for an autonomous central bank independent of the Ministry of Finance and Revenue.^{lvi} According to observers, it is very likely that the law will be adopted.^{lvii} The Central Bank itself will set monetary policy, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Revenue, which currently is focused on both monetary and fiscal policy.^{lviii}

Myanmar’s government has also tried to ease the complexity of doing business. On April 10, 2013, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) opened a one-stop service center for investors in Yangon.^{lix} The intention of the center is to allow investors to get everything done in one place rather than having to work with five or six separate ministries.^{lx} U Aung Naing Oo, deputy director general of the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) stated

“[t]he process for Myanmar nationals and foreigners alike was rather complicated and required several documents . . . we addressed this situation when we drew up the rules and regulations for foreign direct investment, and decided we needed a one-stop service.”^{lxi} Perceptively, he added, “The establishment of DICA could help reduce corruption by cutting down on contacts between business people and bureaucrats in several different departments.”^{lxii}

Another important development last month in the framework for economic development is that—in a move that could irritate China—Myanmar stated that it is planning to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.^{lxiii} This Initiative, which includes governments, civil society, international organizations and resources companies, oversees a voluntary regime for the natural resources industry covering financial transparency, environmental standards, and corporate governance.^{lxiv} The government’s eagerness to join EITI comes as the country prepares to open up huge tracts of the Bay of Bengal for oil and gas exploration; foreign companies are being invited to bid for 30 licenses to operate in Myanmar’s waters of the bay, with a deadline of mid-June to make offers for the blocks.^{lxv}

Joining EITI also gives governments compelling reasons to review—and possibly renegotiate—existing natural resources contracts; EITI pushes for a greater share of the financial profits to go to host countries. This comes on the heels of statements by Myanmar government officials that they are reviewing existing deals.^{lxvi} Western companies have praised the openness of recent oil lease and telecommunication tenders in Myanmar, while the Financial Times has noted recently the strong crackdown on corruption by President Thein Sein’s government.^{lxvii}

B. Developments in Foreign Investment and Economic Development Projects

The U.S. continued its pursuit of greater investment in Myanmar. On April 23, 2013, Acting U.S. Trade Representative Demetrios Marantis headed to Myanmar to begin talks on a framework agreement covering trade and investment.^{lxviii} Jean-Pierre Verbiest, a former Asian Development Bank official who works with West Indochina, which advises businesses in Myanmar said that the visit by Marantis “will give a strong signal that the U.S. is serious about lifting restrictions.”^{lxix} This month the U.S. Trade Representative also proposed giving Myanmar preferential access to the U.S. market under a program to boost trade with poorer countries.^{lxx} All of these actions are likely to increase investment and trade between the U.S. and Myanmar further.

The importance of foreign investment was emphasized by Aung San Suu Kyi during an April visit to Japan, her first trip there in 27 years.^{lxxi} During the trip, Suu Kyi sought Japanese aid “in securing clean drinking water and irrigation water for farming, building roads, supplying electricity, and the enhancement of a medical and healthcare service.”^{lxxii} Japan is already among the leading countries pouring money and aid into Myanmar, including its agreement to cancel debts owed by the former military rulers totalling some US \$3.6 billion.^{lxxiii} Japan also increased its commitment to the Thilawa Economic Zone in April, 2013 by promising to finance a new harbor facility as both the U.S. and EU also expressed interest in the Thilawa zone.^{lxxiv} Japanese companies have also helped to boost Myanmar’s rice exports to record levels.^{lxxv} According to an official government statement, at the end of Suu Kyi’s visit she met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who promised to “keep providing government official development assistance to build social infrastructure in [Myanmar] and help promote private-sector investment.”^{lxxvi}

Singapore also strengthened its business interests in Myanmar this month with the opening in Yangon of an office of the government agency International Enterprise Singapore (IES).^{lxxvii} IES intends to improve its everyday liaisons between the two countries by having a permanent representative in Yangon.^{lxxviii} Singapore’s minister for national development, Khaw

Boon Wan, said there was “great potential for partnerships” in infrastructure development, logistics, manufacturing and trade.^{lxxxix} India also took steps to increase capacity-building in Myanmar, including the development of an information technology institute.^{lxxx} Another significant foreign-funded project that came to fruition in April, 2013 was the opening of a 120 megawatt natural gas power plant built with the assistance of Thailand.^{lxxxii}

As mentioned above, the bidding for telecommunications licenses in Myanmar has been intense and apparently transparent. Vodafone and China Mobile have teamed up to compete for the mobile licenses, through which Myanmar aims to increase mobile penetration from 6% today to as high as 75% to 80% by 2016, representing the creation of a \$10 billion market.^{lxxxiii} Other bidders include a consortium that includes George Soros and Irish entrepreneur Denis O'Brien, owner of Digicel, which operates networks throughout the Caribbean.^{lxxxiiii}

C. Land Seizures

A parliamentary commission report released in April, 2013 found that most farmland in Myanmar taken from farmers by government bodies and private companies was not acquired properly in accord with the existing laws, rules, and regulations.^{lxxxv} The commission found that ministries did not press for the completion of projects used to justify the expropriation of land and that compensation was paid at below market rates.^{lxxxvi} The two biggest sources of land-grabbing according to the report were military uses and government-backed industrial uses.^{lxxxvii} Military officials claimed they would return land not in actual military use but that the return of other land would be “difficult,” and villagers were skeptical that the promises would amount to much.^{lxxxviii}

Additionally, in April, 2013, two protests over infrastructure projects that have been the source of unrest already for a considerable period of time were put down by security forces. In the first case, citizens protesting outside the local offices of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) at Kyaukphyu were arrested.^{lxxxix} The protesters allege that CNPC and its partners, including Myanmar’s own Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, have not paid them full compensation.^{lxxxix} The protests concerned land seizures related to the construction of the Shwe Gas Project which will carry gas through Myanmar to neighboring Yunnan Province in China.^{xc} The protesters allege that they have received only half of the promised land compensation and that terminal development work has polluted fishing areas.^{xc} After putting down the protests authorities charged six villagers with illegal assembly.^{xcii} Additionally, a number of project workers who participated in the protests were allegedly fired.^{xciii} The same pipeline project will be the object of a “social impact assessment” next month by the Myanmar-China Pipeline Watch Committee.^{xciv}

Police also put down a protest by villagers evicted from land near the Letpadaung copper mine project, the earlier site of riots.^{xcv} 200 police mobilized against villagers who were protesting by plowing land.^{xcvi} Reports indicate that violence occurred and one villager was shot while 20 more received baton injuries.^{xcvii} The next day protestors gathered to call for the release of villagers detained in the protests and protests renewed again the following week.^{xcviii} Police accuse the protesters of having thrown incendiary devices and of having injured more than a dozen officers during the protest, thereby instigating the violence.^{xcix}

Other disputes continued throughout the country connected to smaller projects. For instance, a company operating a parking lot on state-owned land in Yangon was accused of breaking ground on a restaurant project not included in the license and taking more than its allotted five acres of land.^c

5. Ethnic Violence

Myanmar's recent history has been ridden with ethnic violence and conflicts between minority groups and government forces, particularly in the Karen, Shan and Kachin states.^{ci} There is a rising concern that the opponents of Myanmar's transition toward civilian rule from military rule could exploit these tensions, fueling ethnic conflict in order to derail reform efforts.^{cii} Furthermore, troubled relations between Myanmar's government and the ethnic minorities constitute a serious obstacle in the path to stability and prosperity.

A. **Kachin**

After speculation that China's objection to Western observers attending ceasefire talks between the Myanmar government and the Kachin Independence Organization led to the postponement of talks, the two sides agreed to resume dialogue in late April.^{ciii} The previous rounds of negotiations between the government and resistance leaders, which were held in February and March, have been unsuccessful.^{civ}

B. **Violence against Muslims**

The violence that originally erupted in Rakhine targeting Rohingya Muslims is now beginning to spread to other parts of the country, where Muslims who have been granted citizenship are now being attacked.^{cv}

1. *Yangon*

A Buddhist mob torched at least two mosques and set hundreds of Muslims' houses on fire, killing one person and injuring at least ten others in the town of Okkan, about 70 miles north of Yangon, on April 30, 2013.^{cvi} Residents stated that as many as 400 Buddhist extremists armed with bricks and sticks attacked Okkan.

2. *Rakhine*

This month, a human rights organization accused Myanmar's security forces of tacitly supporting Rakhine Buddhist outrages against the Rohingya as part of a policy to drive them out of the country.^{cvii} An estimated 800,000 stateless Rohingyas are currently living in Myanmar; they are denied citizenship because the Myanmar government regards them as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants while neighboring Bangladesh also does not recognize them.^{cviii} Despite calls of human rights groups and the United Nations to the government to do more to lessen sectarian tensions since last June, when rioting broke out between Buddhist and Muslims in western Rakhine state, the violence has spread, forcing more than 140,000 people from their homes, most of them Rohingyas.^{cix} The Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingyas are today largely separated by security forces, and the prospects for displaced Rohingyas returning home are dim.^{cx} Human Rights Watch accused the government of complicity in the Rohingya's displacement; alleging that instead of addressing the problem, Myanmar's leaders seem intent on keeping the Rohingyas segregated in camps.

On April 29, 2013, the Inquiry Commission on the Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State, a government commission set up to investigate the 2012 violence, recommended in a report to double the number of security forces in Rakhine State. It also called for the "temporary separation" of the two communities to continue.^{cxii} "While keeping the two communities apart is not a long-term solution, it must be enforced at least until the overt emotions subside," the report recommended.^{cxiii} Both communities highlighted the continued need for the deployment of the

military in the region for safety and security, a summary of the much-delayed findings said.^{cxiii} The report went on to suggest family-planning education to address what it describes as the rapid growth of the Muslim population in the state, sparking immediate criticism from human rights groups.^{cxiv} Instead of using the term “Rohingyas” that is favored by the minority group itself, the report also referred to them throughout as “Bengalis”, the term used by those who argue they are illegal immigrants.^{cxv} Despite proposals for humanitarian relief efforts for the displaced Rohingya, the report drew condemnation for lack of acknowledgment regarding the violations of the Rohingyas’ human rights.^{cxvi}

3. *Indonesian Refugee Camp*

Ethnic tensions between Buddhists and Muslims erupted outside of Myanmar in a refugee camp in Indonesia this month. Eight Buddhists were killed and more than a dozen were wounded on April 5, 2013, when Muslim refugees clashed with Buddhist illegal fishermen from Myanmar at the Immigration Detention Center.^{cxvii} The reason for the riot was stated as sexual harassment of a Rohingya woman by the illegal fishermen.^{cxviii} The Muslim refugees responsible for the killings will be tried in Indonesia.^{cxix}

C. **Allegations of Ethnic Cleansing**

Late this month, the BBC released new footage of the anti-Muslim riots in Mandalay division that killed 43 people in March.^{cxx} The leaked video showed police officers standing by as Buddhist crowds beat and burned men to death.^{cxxi} And on April 22, 2013, on the same day that President Thein Sein was being honored at a fund-raising gala in New York^{cxxii}, advocacy group Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report that accused national security forces of collaborating with police, politicians and Buddhist monks to perpetrate ethnic cleansing in Rakhine state.^{cxxiii} The report, titled “All You Can Do is Pray,” derives its title from a testimony of an incident in which a police officer was asked by a Rohingya for help; “all you can do is pray,” the officer replied.^{cxxiv}

HRW cited that by supporting the creation of a common Buddhist enemy – the Muslims – the military may be hoping to gain support from the Buddhist ethnic minorities that will be necessary to win elections.^{cxxv}

The government of Myanmar dismissed the report as being biased and unacceptable, adding that it would only pay heed to its own investigative commission set up after the initial violence in June, 2012.^{cxxvi} The government also asserted that “the armed force, police force and militias handled the conflicts between the two communities in accordance with the existing laws, rules and regulations taking care of providing security in order to restore law and order and tranquility.”^{cxxvii}

D. **Karen - Aftermaths of Ethnic Violence**

A decrease in hostilities in Karen has been reported, but the population continues to suffer from the aftermaths of the violence through the extensively planted landmines.^{cxxviii} In areas where fighting between the government army and Karen armed groups occurred, both groups as well as the civilian villagers in the areas used landmines to protect themselves.^{cxxix} The Karen Human Rights Group reported that in the eight months since August 2012 to March 2013, at least nine people were killed and at least nine suffered injuries by landmines in Karen State in eastern Myanmar.^{cxxxi} The landmines, while often not fatal to adults, severely mutilate one or both of a victim’s lower legs, and pose far greater risks of death for children.^{cxli} The UN High

Commissioner for Refugees said that about 500,000 refugees from northern and southeastern Myanmar are unable to return to their homes because of the threat posed by landmines.^{cxxxii}

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