

# STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

## MARCH 2018 REPORT

**Summary.** This report reviews the March 2018 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar. Relatedly, it addresses the interchange between Myanmar’s reform efforts and the responses of the international community.

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## **I. Political Developments**

### **A. Political Update: New President of Myanmar**

On March 21, President Htin Kyaw announced that he had resigned, saying he is “taking a rest” following health issues.<sup>1</sup> Htin Kyaw was an important ally in the government for state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, who is constitutionally barred from the presidency, and the pair were childhood friends. Htin Kyaw was nominated as president by Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, the National League for Democracy (“NLD”), in 2016 and she exerted much of her influence through him. Htin Kyaw was the first Myanmar president since the 1962 coup to have no connections to the military.<sup>2</sup>

Reports that Htin Kyaw had been experiencing ill health in the past few months had previously been vigorously denied by the government. However, the state counsellor’s office said he was stepping down to recuperate after undergoing multiple treatments and surgery.<sup>3</sup>

Myanmar’s electoral system requires that the president be voted in from a selection of names put forward by lawmakers, including at least one nominee chosen by the military, which retains a quarter of seats in parliament.

In accordance with the requirement that elections be held within one week of a vacancy being created, Myanmar’s parliament held elections for the new president on March 28, and elected Win Myint. Win Myint garnered a total of 273 votes from his colleagues in the lower house of the 304 votes cast. The other contender, Thaung Aye, from the opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party secured 27 votes, while four votes were rejected.

Win Myint, is a 66-year-old former lawyer and a close aide of Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>4</sup> He has been a speaker in the lower house since 2012 and was widely tipped for the top job. Mr Win Myint was a successful parliamentary candidate in the 1990 general election, but the military invalidated the poll and he was denied a seat. He was elected in 2012 and again in 2015.

During the two-hour parliamentary election proceedings, however, his character and qualifications for the job were not mentioned. Also not discussed were his stands on such pressing issues as the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in Rakhine State, a growing crackdown on freedom of speech, a struggling economy and continued fighting between the military and several ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup>

As compared to Htin Kyaw, Win Myint has more political experience and is considered more of an activist. But analysts said that he was unlikely to make a difference as long as Aung San Suu Kyi maintains her grip on the civilian side of government.<sup>6</sup> “Switching between Htin Kyaw and Win Myint will make no significant change for Myanmar’s democracy,” said Yan Myo Thein, an independent political analyst based in Yangon.<sup>7</sup> “There is just a personality difference.” David Mathieson, an independent analyst in Yangon, said Win Myint was a “true believer” in the party and would continue in the role Aung San Suu Kyi had established for the president as her “human pen.” “He will do what his leader instructs him to, and nothing more,” Mathieson said. “He is there to make the arrangement constitutional, and to maintain that balance of power between the civilian and military governments.”<sup>8</sup>

## B. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

In March, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum announced that it is rescinding the Elie Wiesel Award—its highest honor—it gave in 2012 to Aung San Suu Kyi, saying military crimes against the Muslim Rohingya minority “demand that you use your moral authority to address this situation.”<sup>9</sup>

The museum posted its March 6 letter to Aung San Suu Kyi, sent via Aung Lynn, Myanmar’s ambassador to the United States.<sup>10</sup> “In recent years, the Museum has been closely monitoring the military’s campaign against the Rohingya and your response to it,” the letter reads. “... As the military’s attacks against the Rohingya unfolded in 2016 and 2017, we had hoped that you—as someone we and many others have celebrated for your commitment to human dignity and universal human rights—would have done something to condemn and stop the military’s brutal campaign and to express solidarity with the targeted Rohingya population.” The letter continues, urging her to use her position to cooperate with international efforts “to establish the truth about the atrocities committed in Rakhine State and secure accountability for perpetrators,” as well as to lead changes to Burmese law, which leaves most Rohingya stateless.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the atrocities being committed in Rakhine State continued in March. On March 6, a human rights official with the United Nations delivered an assessment that Myanmar has not stopped its ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people in Rakhine State and that there continued to be a “campaign of terror and forced starvation.”<sup>12</sup> According to Andrew Gilmour, the UN assistant secretary-general for human rights, “The nature of the violence has changed from the frenzied blood-letting and mass rape of last year to a lower intensity campaign of terror and forced starvation.”<sup>13</sup>

Bangladesh and Myanmar authorities had been in talks over repatriating refugees in the coming months but a buildup of Myanmar military on the border in March sparked concern about the prospects of Rohingya returning to their homes. Gilmour said it was “inconceivable” for any Rohingya to return to Rakhine state in the near future in a “safe, dignified and sustainable” way.<sup>14</sup> “The government of Myanmar is busy telling the world that it is ready to receive Rohingya returnees, while at the same time its forces are continuing to drive them into Bangladesh,” Mr Gilmour said.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar report on March 13, Adama Dieng, the UN advisor on genocide prevention, said that all information he had received indicates that Myanmar’s government intended to get rid of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state and possibly even destroy them, “which, if proven, would constitute the crime of genocide.”<sup>16</sup> Dieng visited Bangladesh from March 7 to March 13 to assess the situation of the Rohingya and called what he heard and witnessed “a human tragedy with the fingerprints of the Myanmar government and of the international community.” “The scorched-earth campaign carried out by the Myanmar security forces since August 2017 against the Rohingya population was predictable and preventable,” Dieng said in a statement. “Despite the numerous warnings I have made of the risk of atrocity crimes, the international community has buried its head in the sand.”<sup>17</sup>

On March 9, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, called for all atrocities committed against Myanmar's Rohingya to be referred to the International Criminal Court (“ICC”) for prosecution. He also urged Myanmar to allow UN monitors into restricted areas to investigate what he called suspected “acts of genocide,” saying that the

country would need to “invite us in” if it wishes to disprove allegations of serious human rights violations against the Rohingya. Ro Nay San Lwin, a Rohingya activist, said the UN’s announcement was “long overdue.” “It is very important to prosecute Myanmar leaders at the ICC and to end this ongoing genocide,” Ro Nay San Lwin said.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, government officials in Myanmar continued to express callousness towards the plight of the Rohingya. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said in a speech to military personnel and their families last week in northern Kachin State that Rohingya “do not have any characteristics or culture in common with the ethnicities of Myanmar,” according to his website. The military chief also said the tensions in Rakhine were “fueled because the Bengalis demanded citizenship,” using a term that Rohingya activists reject as implying they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh.<sup>19</sup>

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a statement that he was “shocked” at the comments made by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and urged “all leaders in Myanmar to take a unified stance against incitement to hatred and to promote communal harmony.” “The Secretary-General reiterates the importance of addressing the root causes of the violence and the responsibility of the Government of Myanmar to provide security and assistance to those in need,” the statement said.<sup>20</sup>

### **C. Corruption**

In his inauguration speech, President Win Myint vowed to crack down on corruption, among other similar familiar refrains to improve the rule of law, reform the national judicial system and uphold human rights.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps signaling the seriousness of his intent, he promised “close supervision would be imposed on departments reluctant to make changes,” although time will tell whether his tough stance will be effective against various entrenched departments and officials that have resisted NLD reform efforts to date.<sup>22</sup>

The need to combat corruption is evident: Myanmar’s Anti-Corruption Commission (“Commission”) has received nearly 1,800 complaints relating to charges of corruption in the first quarter of the year, bringing the total number of complaint letters received by the Commission since its opening last November to 4,516.<sup>23</sup> Complaints range from management and administrative error to allegations of abuse and bribery, and include complaints relating to “land grab” and other judiciary issues.<sup>24</sup> The Commission plans to release investigation procedures and its code of conduct next month.<sup>25</sup> It has been preparing investigation procedures since last December and has now reached its final stage, according to Commission chairman Aung Kyi.<sup>26</sup>

### **D. International Community / Sanctions**

Despite the international community imposing sanctions on Myanmar over the last several months due to the persecution of the Rohingya community by the Myanmar military, The Guardian has uncovered that the Australian Defense Department still plans to spend almost AUD\$ 400,000 on English lessons, event attendances and training courses for the Myanmar military. The Australian Defense Department has resisted calls from human rights groups to suspend military cooperation with Myanmar, stating that their engagement with Myanmar is

limited to humanitarian and non-combat areas, and arguing that maintaining this engagement has allowed them to raise concerns directly with the Myanmar military regarding the Rakhine state. Diana Sayed, Amnesty International's crisis campaigns coordinator, said the Australian government's strategy of continued engagement cannot be justified given the extent and extremity of the Rohingya crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Aung San Suu Kyi visited Sydney in March for the ASEAN-Australia special summit. According to Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, Aung San Suu Kyi personally addressed Myanmar's ongoing Rohingya crisis at a closed-door meeting of south-east Asian leaders, asking for help from ASEAN nations with humanitarian relief to improve Myanmar's capacity to recover from the conflict. Aung San Suu Kyi has spoken little publicly about the conflict. ASEAN has a declared policy of non-interference in the affairs of member states but the Malaysian prime minister, Najib Razak, has said that the ongoing persecution of Rohingya is of international concern: "Because of the suffering of Rohingya people and that of displacement around the region, the situation in Rakhine state and Myanmar can no longer be considered to be a purely domestic matter... because it has the potential of developing into a serious security threat to the region." Turnbull said the issue of the Rohingya crisis was "discussed constructively" and that Australia and ASEAN member states were ready to assist.<sup>28</sup>

In the midst of renewed sanctions and focus on human rights abuses in Myanmar, the US motorcycle manufacturer Harley-Davidson opened its first authorized showroom and service center in Myanmar on March 3, in Mandalay. Mandalay has numerous motorcycle clubs and riders, and so the city has drawn the attention of motorcycle dealers. Bikers will now be able to purchase and repair Harley-Davidsons in Myanmar, rather than go to Thailand. Investment has remained low in Myanmar since the US eased sanctions in 2012, though some major American brands have launched in the country, including Coca-Cola, Gap, KFC and Pizza Hut. Scot Marciel, the US ambassador to Myanmar, stated during his remarks at the showroom opening that "business ties between the US and Myanmar are increasing. Harley-Davidson is a favorite among US bikers and opening this showroom will strengthen those ties. I hope Burmese bikers will enjoy their rides."<sup>29</sup>

UN investigators briefed the press about the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar in mid-March and labelled Facebook as a key perpetrator, enabling the amplification of ethnic tensions in the country. One UN investigator alleged that Facebook posts have been used to incite "a lot of violence and a lot of hatred against the Rohingya or other ethnic minorities" in Myanmar. Facebook's news feed chief Adam Mosseri said that Facebook has had difficulty in finding third-party fact checkers to partner with to curb the spread of fake news in Myanmar, admitting that what's happening on Facebook in Myanmar has been a challenge for the company, which is still figuring out how to address it.<sup>30</sup>

## **II. Civil and Political Rights**

### **A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association**

In early March, hundreds of people marched through the city of Yangon to oppose proposed legislation being debated in the Burmese parliament which activists warn would further restrict free speech.<sup>31</sup> The proposal would amend the 2011 Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful

Procession Law. Under the current law, public demonstrations are allowed only if organizers first obtain permission from local authorities. Those who violate the law are subject to three to six months in prison and a 30,000 kyat (US \$22) fine. When the law was first passed, it was seen as an improvement over the previous outright prohibition against street rallies and demonstrations, which had been in effect under previous military juntas. But in recent years, rights groups have called for changes to the law, which they say is routinely used to jail activists, by adding amendments to better protect rights to peaceful assembly and free expression, while abandoning criminal penalties and vague restrictions on speech contrary to international standards.

Rather than loosening limitations on public demonstrations and abandoning criminal penalties, however, the proposed amendments would further tighten restrictions on public assembly. Specifically, the proposal would impose three-year prison terms for those supporting (financially or otherwise) a demonstration that harms “security, rule of law and stability of the state, and the moral interests of the people.” The amendments would also require any protest organizers to provide details of the budget and source of their funds for a demonstration.<sup>32</sup>

“If they are trying to make it difficult to protest, the authorities that rule the country—the parliament, judiciary and government—cannot hear the true opinions of the people,” said Zaw Yan, a farmers’ rights activist who was one of about 500 farmers, workers and political activists who marched through the former capital’s downtown in a protest against the amendment. Nearly 190 Myanmar civil society groups have signed a petition against the amendment.<sup>33</sup>

Aung San Suu Kyi’s NLD party is backing the changes, which come amid rising concern that her two-year-old administration is failing to protect human rights. NLD spokesman Nyan Win declined to comment.<sup>34</sup>

## **B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship**

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, the two Reuters journalists who were arrested on December 12 on charges of intending to expose state secrets, appeared in court on March 21.<sup>35</sup> The preliminary hearings in March were held to decide whether the pair will face charges under the colonial-era Officials Secrets Act, which carries a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison. “They have been detained in Myanmar since December 12 simply for doing their jobs as journalists,” Reuters President and Editor-in-Chief Stephen J Adler said in a statement. Diplomats from countries including the United States, Canada, Sweden and the European Union attended the court hearing. The Danish embassy, which has closely monitored the case, said the pair had spent “100 days behind bars for ensuring the public’s right to information.”<sup>36</sup>

Prior to their arrest, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo had been working on an investigative report on the killing of ten Rohingya Muslims who had been buried in a mass grave. The Reuters report detailed how Myanmar army troops and Buddhist villagers executed ten Rohingya men in Rakhine’s Inn Dinn village on September 2, 2017 before dumping their bodies into a mass grave. Despite repeatedly denying the presence of mass graves in the state, the Myanmar army eventually issued a rare statement admitting that security forces took part in the extrajudicial killings of the ten men, labelling them “terrorists.”<sup>37</sup>

In late March, it was announced that human rights lawyer Amal Clooney had joined the legal team representing Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, lending both counsel and an international spotlight to the journalists' case. Clooney, who worked at the Hague before practicing law in London, has previously taken on several high-profile international cases, including representing Yazidi victims of genocide and defending Azerbaijani investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova against politically motivated prosecution.<sup>38</sup>

### **C. Land Seizures**

In Yangon, plans for a “new city” development are underway. Approximately 20,000 acres west of downtown Yangon will be “transformed” into an urban industrial district.<sup>39</sup> Landowners in the area will be required to surrender their land, and can opt to receive either cash or an area the size of 20% of their current land in the new development.<sup>40</sup> Landowners that do not make an affirmative decision will receive cash.<sup>41</sup> Reportedly, many current landowners are opting to receive an area of land within the new development, which they believe will ultimately be worth more than the cash offered.<sup>42</sup> Farmers in the area are said to be happy with the compensation offer, which is fairer than what they were offered under previous iterations of the project.<sup>43</sup>

In Yangon, residents living near a high rise development are anxious about the possible unintended release of water from a 92 year old underground storage reservoir, holding approximately 20 million gallons of water.<sup>44</sup> Nearby residents have noted that if damage were to occur, “most of Yangon would suffer,” both from damage caused by flooding and possible water shortages caused by loss of the underground tank that distributes water to a number of townships.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, water from the storage facility flows into a larger reservoir which distributes water to nearly one million people.<sup>46</sup> After water began to breach one of the walls of the storage reservoir in February, residents complained and, eventually, the project was suspended until the developer could show that they had an adequate plan in place to avoid catastrophe.<sup>47</sup> In addition to concerns about the reservoir bursting, residents are also concerned about the risk of a possible landslide in the wet season since previously forested land had been cleared for the development.<sup>48</sup>

In Kayin State, villagers protested against ongoing military road construction.<sup>49</sup> The new road cuts across local lands, displacing villagers. In addition to villagers displaced by the road building, many have fled due to renewed fear of fighting between government forces and the Karen National Liberation Army. Over 1,700 villagers have fled in the last couple of weeks and most are now hiding in nearby forests with insufficient food, medicine and bedding.<sup>50</sup>

In eastern Shan State, 385 acres out of a total of 1,081 acres confiscated by the Ministry of Defense have been returned to farmers.<sup>51</sup> In addition, 696 acres confiscated by the Ministry of Defense have been returned to the Shan State government.<sup>52</sup> The Chairman of the Central Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands made clear that it is important to his Committee that the living standards of farmers are improved and that there are adequate markets for agricultural products after the return of confiscated farmland.<sup>53</sup>

Lastly, there were large scale protests in Rakhine state against the China National Petroleum Corporation and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise for the companies' failure to

give adequate compensation for farmlands damaged by pipeline construction.<sup>54</sup> The farmers are asking for both compensation and for their land to be returned to the original state. One round of compensation has been given for farmlands damaged in the pipeline construction, although the protesting farmers were not included in that distribution.

### **III. Economic Development**

#### **A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment**

The Yangon Stock Exchange (“YSX”) announced on March 9 that the stock trading value of Myanmar’s five listed companies reached all-time low in February 2018. The February total trading value of 740 million kyats (US \$569,230) represented a sharp drop compared to the January trading value of 1.2 billion kyats (US \$923,076).<sup>55</sup>

Currently, five listed companies—First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB) and TMH Telecom Public Co. Ltd.—are trading on the YSX.

Observers have attributed the drop in stock trading value to decreasing share prices of listed companies and the failure to attract public interest in public investment.<sup>56</sup> Recently, the YSX introduced an online trading system to attract more investors to the country’s stock market as well as to promote stock trading value.<sup>57</sup>

#### **B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects**

The International Finance Corporation (“IFC”) is extending a long-term financing facility of \$15 million for the development of a port terminal at Thilawa.<sup>58</sup> The total cost of the port is estimated to be around \$65 million. The terminal is a joint venture between Lluvia, an agricultural product processing company incorporated in Myanmar, and Kamigumi, an integrated logistics firm incorporated in Japan.<sup>59</sup> The port will be one of the first of its kind in Myanmar, due to its specialized bulk cargo handling capacity.<sup>60</sup> The port will help reduce transport and logistics costs, supplement trade and increase competitiveness of the country’s supply chains.<sup>61</sup>

The Myanmar government launched a Development Assistance Policy (“DAP”), with the goal of distributing funds from international aid organizations to support initiatives in need of funding in an effective and transparent manner.<sup>62</sup> The lack of a proper policy to ensure efficient disbursement of funds has resulted in delays in approvals and high transaction costs. DAP is meant to ensure that development assistance is used to accelerate the country’s development and the achievement of the country’s economic goals.<sup>63</sup> Under the new policy, standard operating procedures will be implemented to streamline identification, approval and implementation of initiatives that are tied to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals. The government will also establish ten “sector coordination groups” to facilitate effective utilization of development assistance in designated areas such as agriculture, education, energy, healthcare, nutrition, job creation, social protection and disaster, transport, information and communications technology and the environment.<sup>64</sup>

The regional government of Yangon submitted plans to the National Planning Commission to implement regional development in the area with the help of public-private partnerships.<sup>65</sup> The regional government seeks to promote economic growth in three main

sectors: agriculture, industry and services.<sup>66</sup> Overall, the plan is to support the development of industrial zones and the growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises. It plans to begin work on the project from April 2018 through September 2018, and has already conducted feasibility studies and begun contacting companies that may be interested in a public-private partnership.<sup>67</sup>

The Myanmar government has begun overhauling its national rail system, which was neglected during the decades of military rule.<sup>68</sup> Work started in late February to upgrade the railway system around Yangon. A loan from Japan will cover 70% of the costs of the \$340 million project.<sup>69</sup> In addition to rebuilding the railway itself, the government is also redeveloping the Yangon Central Railway Station, which will be the main stop on the railway loop. The government has selected a Singaporean real estate group as the preferred bidder for this task.<sup>70</sup> It is expected that the project will continue to expand, and participants in the project believe that it will become the primary international investment project contributing to Myanmar's economy and will attract international investors to Yangon.

#### **IV. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence**

##### **A. Ethnic Violence**

According to community leader Naw Maithat, the bodies of two civilians last seen in the custody of Myanmar soldiers have been found in a shallow grave in Kachin State, where fighting between government forces and an ethnic armed group is ongoing.<sup>71</sup> Naw Maithat said the two ethnic Kachin men lived in a refugee camp and were taken away by soldiers on January 31 while working on a nearby farm.<sup>72</sup> Kachin state police officer Myo Thura Naung said on March 9 that they had yet to be informed about the incident.<sup>73</sup> Fortify Rights, a Southeast Asia-focused human rights group, said that the two men were last seen in custody of soldiers, both bound and one of them were badly beaten.<sup>74</sup> The two men's relatives and Fortify Rights urged the authorities to investigate the killings of these men and hold the perpetrators accountable.<sup>75</sup>

In Shan State, the latest round of fighting between troops from the Restoration Council of Shan State ("RCSS") and the Palaung State Liberation Front ("PSLF") has resulted in a number of civilian casualties and has forced approximately 1,000 local residents to flee their homes.<sup>76</sup> Earlier in March, shelling from the fighting left two residents of Tawphe village dead and three injured and forced approximately 500 other villagers to flee.<sup>77</sup> The RCSS is one of the eight original signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement ("NCA"), while the PSLF was excluded from signing the accord because of its ongoing hostilities with Myanmar's armed forces.<sup>78</sup> A PSLF spokesman claimed that the government did not stop RCSS forces from advancing their position from the south into PSLF territory after the signing of the NCA, but instead helped RCSS' movements and, in some instances, shelled the PSLF's forces with heavy artillery.<sup>79</sup> He also said that, in many cases, the Myanmar army has launched offensives against the PSLF, which were followed by RCSS attacks and that the Myanmar army was using the RCSS to weaken the PSLF's forces.<sup>80</sup>

In a March 12 speech before the United Nations Human Rights Council, the chairperson of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, Marzuki Darusman, said that the long-standing conflicts in Kachin and Shan states have recently intensified, leading to more reports of serious violations of international human rights standards

and humanitarian law committed in these areas by security forces.<sup>81</sup> These violations include reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, civilian disappearances, destruction of property, torture and inhumane treatment of villagers, sexual violence, forced labor, recruitment of children into armed forces, and indiscriminate attacks.<sup>82</sup> Darusman also mentioned reports of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed by ethnic armed organizations.<sup>83</sup>

Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, also briefly mentioned the violence against civilians in Kachin and Shan state in his remarks before the Human Rights Council, saying that civilian casualties continue to be reported as a result of attacks by the security forces.<sup>84</sup>

## **B. Peace Talks**

The government and the Karenni National Progressive Party (“KNPP”) held another round of talks on March 7 to discuss the NCA.<sup>85</sup> The KNPP said it would also seek to discuss the implementation of bilateral agreements on matters relating to the establishment of liaison offices, ongoing monitoring of the joint ceasefire, and the deployment of troops. The KNPP said its decision to sign or not sign the NCA would depend on the outcome of the military’s investigation of the killing of KNPP members in December 2017, allegedly by government troops.<sup>86</sup>

The United Wa State Party (“UWSP”) denied claims that it plans to sign the NCA and accused a member of the government Peace Commission of attempting to mislead the public.<sup>87</sup> The UWSP said the statement by Aung Soe, a member of the Peace Commission, was “specious and we suspect it was made to deliberately confuse the public. This was very irresponsible and confuses fact and fiction. It has caused unnecessary disruption to the peace process in Myanmar, which already has problems.” The UWSP has said that it would only sign the NCA if the government and military amended parts of the NCA that specifically apply to its region.

The New Mon State Party (“NMSP”) cancelled local political dialogue meetings for ethnic Mon because the Tatmadaw refused to allow more than 30 people to join the events. The five meetings were intended to host an estimated 200 people across Mon State on March 10 in preparation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Union Peace Conferenced scheduled for May.<sup>88</sup> The NMSP planned to hold a national-level dialogue from April 6 through April 9 in Mon State’s Ye Township, but the discussion was delayed due to the same Tatmadaw restrictions on the number of participants.<sup>89</sup> The national-level political dialogue is a mandatory requirement under the NCA, and the issue has been submitted to the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee for resolution.

Rakhine leaders from the Arakan Liberation party (“ALP”), the Arakan National party (“ANP”) and civil society groups dissolved their working committee on national-level political dialogue after the government refused to allow it to hold public consultations due to ongoing conflict with Rohingya militants in the state.<sup>90</sup> The ALP is a signatory to the NCA. Under the NCA, the ALP has the right to hold a national-level political dialogue. It planned to hold public meetings before opening the political dialogue in the region.

The Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (“FPNCC”), a northeastern-based ethnic alliance, said in a statement that it seeks further support from China in Myanmar’s peace process.<sup>91</sup> The FPNCC requested China’s assistance to ensure security during the peace process and reiterated that it would attend the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference if the bloc is officially invited to do so.<sup>92</sup>

1 The Guardian, March 21, 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/21/myanmar-president-aung-san-suu-kyi-confidante-resigns-htin-kyaw>.

2 *Id.*

3 *Id.*

4 The New York Times, March 28, 2018: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/28/world/asia/myanmar-president-u-win-myint.html>.

5 *Id.*

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.*

8 *Id.*

9 The Washington Post, March 7, 2018: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/03/07/holocaust-museum-rescinds-elie-weisel-award-to-nobel-winner-san-suu-kyi/>.

10 *Id.*

11 *Id.*

12 BBC News, March 6, 2018: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43298382>.

13 *Id.*

14 *Id.*

15 *Id.*

16 The Los Angeles Times, March 13, 2018: <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-myanmar-rohingyas-20180313-story.html>.

17 *Id.*

18 *Id.*

19 Reuters, March 27, 2018: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un/u-n-chief-shocked-by-top-myanmar-generals-comments-on-rohingya-idUSKBN1H31VK>.

20 *Id.*

21 The Irrawaddy, March 30, 2018: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/new-president-vows-bring-democracy-human-rights-myanmar.html>.

22 *Id.*

23 Xinhua News, April 1, 2018: [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/01/c\\_137080423.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/01/c_137080423.htm).

24 *Id.*

25 Eleven Myanmar, March 24, 2018: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13628>.

26 *Id.*

27 The Guardian, March 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/mar/06/australia-to-train-myanmar-military-despite-ethnic-cleansing-accusations>

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