

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

JUNE 2022 REPORT

Summary. This report reviews the June 2022 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar.

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I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

Southern Sagaing Region became the target of a series of attacks by the military in early June.¹ On June 5, a member of a local civilian defense force was burned to death and the bodies of six civilians were found with signs that they had been tortured before they were killed.² Between June 12-16, around 90 soldiers and four resistance group fighters were killed in clashes with people's defense forces ("PDFs") in Sagaing and Magwe Regions.³

Fourteen police officers riding in a civilian vehicle were killed by the Khin-U PDF resistance group after failing to stop at a checkpoint.⁴ On June 22, 25 soldiers were killed in attacks against PDFs at a village in Tamu Township.⁵ A few days later, resistance groups in Tamu ambushed a convoy of more than 12 military vehicles.⁶ On June 27, Tamu-PDF again conducted multiple ambushes on military convoys.⁷ Around 40 soldiers were killed, at least six soldiers were injured and at least 3 vehicles were damaged in these attacks.⁸

On June 2, 97 homes were burned and three people died following a military raid of a village in Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region.⁹ On June 7, around 120 soldiers raided and destroyed more than 100 homes in Chan Thar, Sagaing Region.¹⁰ Around 100 soldiers attacked Ta Ohn village on June 9, and bodies of eight civilians were found afterwards.¹¹ Between June 10-12, at least 30 villages along the border of Magway and Sagaing Regions were also placed under attack.¹² In response to an attack on June 9 that killed three soldiers, a group of around 300 soldiers raided villages in Salingyi, Yesagyo and Myaing Townships.¹³ On June 30, around 100 military troops attacked around 20 villages in Yinmabin Township, Sagaing Region.¹⁴ More than 7,000 civilians fled their homes.¹⁵

On June 29, four men were injured when the Myanmar military indiscriminately fired into a village in southern Shan State.¹⁶ Two of the four villagers shot suffered serious injuries during the attack.¹⁷ Although the reason the military opened fire in the village is unknown, the military has been sending many troops to find PDF fighters in Ywa Ngan Township.¹⁸ Many villagers have also been detained.¹⁹ According to a civilian from Kyauk Nget, who requested anonymity, seven people were detained in Sinsar Pyar on June 26.²⁰ Soldiers also attacked a home in Sinsar Pyar and six houses and two vehicles in Kyauk Nget.²¹

Regime forces arrested more than 40 young adults between June 12-14 who participated in anti-regime flash demonstrations in Yangon Region.²²

Former State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi was transferred to Naypyitaw Prison on June 22, and is now in solitary confinement in a small isolated building that was specifically built for the former State Counselor.²³ The first court session at the prison site was conducted the following day, and Suu Kyi's legal team was told that all future hearings will be held at the prison compound.²⁴ She was previously held under house arrest in an undisclosed location since February 2021.²⁵

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

On June 20, tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh staged demonstrations demanding that they be allowed to return to Myanmar, from which they were originally driven out due to violence by the Myanmar military.²⁶ Bangladesh had banned the Rohingya refugees from holding rallies after an August 2019 protest that included over 100,000 refugees, but Bangladeshi authorities allowed the June marches ahead of World Refugee Day.²⁷ According to Bangladeshi authorities deployed to prevent violence, the demonstrations were peaceful and thousands of refugees, including young children, demanded the right to return.²⁸

In mid-June, the foreign secretaries of Bangladesh and Myanmar held a meeting by video conference for the first time in nearly three years.²⁹ The Bangladeshi foreign ministry told reporters that their foreign secretary pushed the Myanmar junta to begin repatriating Rohingya refugees by the end of the year.³⁰ Bangladesh is hopeful that repatriation can begin on a limited scale after the end of the year's monsoon season.³¹

B. Corruption

On May 31, Maung Weik, a leading businessman and the key witness in a corruption case against Aung San Suu Kyi, testified that an alleged bribe paid to her was really a donation to her charity, the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation.³² Founded in 2012, the not-for-profit foundation provided free vocational training and carried out humanitarian work and was financed by donors from around the world.³³ Maung Weik, the owner of Sae Paing Construction Co., said he made four payments: \$100,00 in 2018, \$150,000 in 2019, \$50,000 in February 2020 and \$250,000 in April 2020.³⁴ At the hearing on May 31, the court also heard from Ye Htet of the Anti-Corruption Commission, who is the complainant in another corruption case against Aung San Suu Kyi, over the acquisition of land for her foundation in Naypyitaw.³⁵

On June 17, ousted Mandalay Region chief minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was sentenced to 21 years in prison on five counts of corruption by a junta court at Mandalay's Obo Prison.³⁶ The charges filed by the regime's Anti-Corruption Commission accused Dr. Zaw Myint Maung of taking bribes from Maung Weik in exchange for business contracts and abusing his position of power to grant land permits for NLD offices.³⁷ Maung Weik had testified that he only contributed cash for Dr. Zaw Myint Maung's medical treatment.³⁸ The NLD vice chair was given five years each for three corruption charges over the alleged taking of kickbacks to cover costs when he received medical treatment in Bangkok in 2019 for leukemia and three years each on two other corruption charges, said his legal team.³⁹ His legal team said that they "will appeal against the ruling because the court handed down the jail sentence without strong evidence."⁴⁰

Ye Min Oo, the former Yangon Region finance minister, was sentenced to 15 years in prison on five counts of corruption on June 20 at a junta court in Naypyitaw Prison.⁴¹ The regime accused Ye Min Oo of handing out corrupt loans to businesses when he chaired the Naypyitaw Development Bank.⁴² He was given three years for each charge and still faces additional corruption charges.⁴³ Ye Min Oo was detained in Yangon the day after the February 1 coup.⁴⁴

C. International Community / Sanctions

In an informal meeting of the United Nations (“UN”) General Assembly, UN Special Envoy Noeleen Heyzer warned that the crisis in Myanmar has “both deepened and expanded dramatically,” calling the crisis “one of the world’s largest refugee emergencies.”⁴⁵ Both the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (“ASEAN”) have implored that renewed efforts are needed to address the crisis.⁴⁶

India excluded the Myanmar junta from an ASEAN meeting held in India in mid-June, continuing its practice of blocking junta participation in summits since 2021.⁴⁷ Currently, ASEAN has a “non-interference” policy towards Myanmar and the Myanmar junta.⁴⁸ Malaysia, an ASEAN member, has continually called on ASEAN to instead move to a policy of “non-indifference,” a stance which has been commended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar.⁴⁹

A U.S. State Department official cast doubt over the junta’s pledge to hold new elections in August 2023, commenting that “there’s no chance it could be free and fair, and it can be an attempt to just manipulate the region, the international community.”⁵⁰

In mid-June, the United Kingdom announced additional sanctions against three Myanmar arms brokers who supply the Myanmar Air Force.⁵¹

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

On June 3, Myanmar military spokesperson General Zaw Min Tun announced the executions of two prominent leaders: Ko Jimmy, a leading activist since the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, and Phyo Zayar Thaw, a former National League for Democracy (“NLD”) Member of Parliament.⁵² Both were arrested for allegedly inciting unrest and taking part in terrorism, which are offenses under the Counterterrorism Law.⁵³ Appeals against their death sentences, which were related to charges of treason and terrorism, were rejected.⁵⁴ Two other men accused of murdering military informants also face execution.⁵⁵ If carried out, these executions would be the first in Myanmar in 30 years.⁵⁶ The international community, including the United Nations, condemned the death sentences and called for a stop to attacks on civilians.⁵⁷ The U.S. Government and the French Embassy in Yangon also issued statements condemning the death sentences.⁵⁸ According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, at least 14,000 people have been arrested, and at least 114 of them sentenced to death, in the past year.⁵⁹

The military regime rejected a request from the International Committee of the Red Cross (“ICRC”) to allow certain humanitarian activities, such as humanitarian prison visits and family visits, which have been suspended since March 2020. The request came after a meeting between the ICRC regional director and the junta cabinet in mid-June. Further, there have been reports of human rights violations inside Myanmar’s prisons, such as sexual violence against prisoners and abuses against political prisoners who continue to show opposition.⁶⁰

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

The Myanmar regime charged *The Irrawaddy*'s former photojournalist, Zaw Zaw, with incitement on June 6.⁶¹ Zaw Zaw was detained in Mandalay in April and sent to Obo Prison.⁶² His lawyer believes the charge relates to a Facebook post in which Zaw Zaw denounced the junta.⁶³ Since last year's coup, the military regime has arrested over 140 media workers, of whom around 60 remain behind bars.⁶⁴

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

India's Kaladan Project in Myanmar, aimed at providing an alternate transport outlet to India's landlocked northeastern region, continues to suffer from delays.⁶⁵ The Indian government terminated its contract with a joint venture consisting of Engineers Projects India Limited ("EPIL") and C & C Construction Co. Ltd., which was tasked to execute the road component of the project in Myanmar.⁶⁶ The Indian Ministry of External Affairs confirmed the termination but did not provide further context. An unnamed official blamed the "uncertain situation in Myanmar."⁶⁷

Over 450 civil society organizations urged France to prevent the French oil and gas company, Total, from funding Myanmar's junta through the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise ("MOGE").⁶⁸ The European Union sanctioned MOGE in February, but Total needs French government approval to transfer money related to decommissioning oil and gas wells, environmental restoration and shares and other interests to MOGE.⁶⁹ Total is due to hand over millions of dollars to MOGE by July 20, after which it would be replaced by Thai-firm PTT Exploration and Production as project operator, according to the Blood Money Campaign.⁷⁰

Japanese drinks company, Kirin Holdings, will sell its stake in a Myanmar joint venture with a military-linked local partner.⁷¹ Kirin's 51% stake in Myanmar Brewery Limited will be sold back to the brewery for 22.4 billion yen (US\$164 million), ending its partnership with brewery parent company Myanma Economic Holdings Public Company Limited.⁷²

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

Several intense shootouts between the military and the combined forces of the Kachin Region PDF-Myohla and the Kachin Independence Army ("KIA") broke out near a village in

Shwegu Township, Kachin State on June 12.⁷³ During the firefight, around 50 regime troops were killed and many others wounded.⁷⁴ Another nine regime troops were killed when the KIA used mines to attack a detachment of 30 regime troops near Namsi Awang Village in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State on June 12.⁷⁵

The KIA also clashed with the military on June 15 and 16 in Kutkai, Shan State.⁷⁶ Heavy artillery shells were reportedly fired by the Myanmar army at Kone Chan, injuring a 50-year-old man.⁷⁷ Three people from the village were captured by junta troops during the attack according to the Lashio-based *Shwe Phee Myay News Agency*.⁷⁸ One day later, artillery shells reportedly fired by the Myanmar military hit an internally displaced persons camp in Kutkai, killing two women and injuring an elderly man, according to locals.⁷⁹

B. Peace Talks

On May 30, junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met with the United Wa State Army's political wing ("UWSP").⁸⁰ After the meeting, the regime announced that the UWSP accepted the idea of establishing a federal democracy and that the regime agreed, in principle, to the UWSP's demand for an autonomous state for ethnic Wa people.⁸¹ This meeting marks the fourth EAO to hold talks with the regime, following the Restoration Council of Shan State, the New Mon State Party and the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army – Peace Council, which discussed and reached a general consensus regarding the establishment of a federal multiparty democracy.⁸²

Myanmar's parallel National Unity Government ("NUG") declared on May 31 that any agreements made between ethnic armed organizations ("EAOs") and the military regime are illegal and will not be recognized.⁸³ The NUG clarified in a statement that the military regime is guilty of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.⁸⁴

On June 14, the Republic of Union of Myanmar State Administration Council issued a Statement on Peace.⁸⁵ The statement proclaims year 2022 as the year of peace with the end goal of achieving "perpetual peace as aspired by the entire nation" and asked the remaining EAOs to join peace talks "in the interests of their regions and the country" by June 30.⁸⁶ The Karen National Union responded to the statement, saying that the regime is overwhelmed by the fallout from the military coup and remains unable to win recognition from the international community.⁸⁷

On June 17, the regime met with the Pa-O National Liberation Organization-PNLO delegation.⁸⁸ The attendees discussed peace issues and development-related matters.⁸⁹

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- ⁵ The Irrawaddy, June 24, 2022: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-resistance-claims-25-junta-soldiers-killed.html>.
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- ¹⁷ *Id.*
- ¹⁸ *Id.*
- ¹⁹ *Id.*
- ²⁰ *Id.*
- ²¹ *Id.*
- ²² Myanmar Now, June 15, 2022: <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/more-than-30-youth-arrested-amid-increased-junta-surveillance-in-yangon>.
- ²³ The Irrawaddy, June 22, 2022: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-moves-detained-leader-daw-aung-san-su-ki-to-prison.html>; see also Reuters, June 22, 2022: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-shifts-su-ki-trial-prison-venue-2022-06-22/>.
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- ³⁸ *Id.*
- ³⁹ *Id.*
- ⁴⁰ *Id.*
- ⁴¹ The Irrawaddy, June 21, 2022: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/former-yangon-finance-minister-sentenced-by-myanmar-junta-for-corruption.html>.
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- ⁴⁴ *Id.*
- ⁴⁵ Mizzima, June 15, 2022: <https://mizzima.com/article/un-special-envoy-addresses-un-general-assembly-myanmar-crisis>.
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