

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

OCTOBER 2023 REPORT

Summary. This report reviews the October 2023 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar.

I.	Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance.....	2
II.	Political Developments.....	4
A.	Rohingya Refugee Crisis.....	4
B.	Corruption.....	4
C.	International Community / Sanctions.....	4
III.	Civil and Political Rights.....	5
A.	Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association.....	5
B.	Freedom of the Press and Censorship.....	6
IV.	Economic Development.....	7
A.	Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment.....	7
B.	Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects.....	7
C.	Land Seizure.....	9
V.	Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence.....	9
A.	Ethnic Violence.....	9
B.	Peace Talks.....	11

I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

Five displaced residents of Chin State filed a criminal complaint on October 25 against the military regime before the Department of Justice in the Philippines for committing war crimes against their community.¹ The filing was made on the second anniversary of an arson attack committed by the military regime on the town of Thantlang, where at least 250 people were killed, 60,000 residents were displaced and 2,000 homes were destroyed, according to the Myanmar Accountability Project.² The complainants are requesting that Philippine officials conduct an investigation and prosecute the military regime under the 2009 International Humanitarian Law, which they argue obligates the Philippines to conduct investigations and prosecute those who commit war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity under the principle of universal jurisdiction.³ Philippine prosecutors have up to 90 days to rule on the complaint.⁴ If prosecutors open an investigation, the Philippines will be the first Asian nation to invoke universal jurisdiction in investigating and prosecuting war crimes.⁵

The civilian National Unity Government (“NUG”) called for international coordination to facilitate legal action and more aggressive economic sanctions against the military junta in response to its escalation of atrocities against children in resistance strongholds.⁶ The NUG said nearly 500 children have lost their lives and around 120 schools have been destroyed in junta shelling strikes, airstrikes and infantry raids since the 2021 military coup.⁷

According to the Burmese Women’s Union (“BWU”), at least 56 women were killed and 43 were detained by the military regime from July to September of this year.⁸ The BWU said that of those killed, 30 were killed in shelling, 13 were shot dead, six were killed in aerial bombings, three were burned to death, two were beaten to death and one was killed while in a military regime detention center.⁹ According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, from February 2021 to the end of September 2023, 613 women have been killed and 4,969 have been arrested by the military.¹⁰ The BWU believe that the number of women participating in the Spring Revolution is rising, leading the military to become more aggressive in cracking down on their participation.¹¹

On October 4, junta fighter jets bombed a camp for internally displaced persons in Hpruso Township, Kayah State, as fighting erupted on the main road about three miles away.¹² A makeshift school and three dwellings in the camp were destroyed, according to the Karenni Human Rights Group.¹³ No casualties were reported.¹⁴

At least 57 military troops were killed during the first few days of October in incidents that took place in Bago, Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions.¹⁵ At least 15 soldiers were killed and 10 were injured when resistance forces attacked a group of 200 troops while they were raiding and burning almost the entirety of Pazon Myaung village, Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region.¹⁶ On October 5, several resistance groups worked together to use drones to drop bombs on troops stationed in Thone Sal village, Madaya Township, Mandalay Region.¹⁷ At least 20 troops were killed.¹⁸ From October 7-10, at least 31 troops were killed in clashes in Sagaing and Magway regions and Shan State.¹⁹ Ten of such troops were killed on October 9 in Moby, Pekon Township, southern Shan State, when resistance group clashed with military forces.²⁰ Myanmar junta troops and allied Pyu Saw Htee militia torched a village in Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region on October 10.²¹ The raid came a day after regime troops suffered heavy casualties in a

battle with resistance forces over the electricity substation in neighboring Nga Pyaw Tine village, according to locals.²²

At least 76 military troops, three resistance fighters and two civilians were killed from October 12-15 in clashes in Shan and Chin States and Magway, Sagaing, Mandalay and Tanintharyi regions.²³ Around 40 troops were allegedly killed on October 12, according to one of the 20 resistance groups from Magway, Sagaing and Mandalay which took part in an attack against a military unit of 80 troops in Pauk Au village, Yesagy Township, Magway Region.²⁴ Sixteen regime soldiers were killed and more than 30 wounded in two weeks of fighting beginning on October 13 around the China-backed Tagaung Taung nickel mine in Thabeikkyin Township, Mandalay Region, according to Peoples' Defense Forces ("PDFs").²⁵ According to local sources, trucks hired to transport nickel ore were trapped at the mine for days due to fear of resistance attacks.²⁶ Myanmar junta troops torched at least four villages in Yesagy Toownship, Magway Region from October 12-15, killing two people and displacing more than 10,000 residents.²⁷

Myanmar's junta seized a resistance camp in Ayadaw Township, Sagaing Region on October 16, killing at least three members of Ayadaw PDF.²⁸ A resistance scout was also shot dead on October 15 by junta troops between War Yaung and War Tan villages.²⁹ Six detainees from War Yaung, who had been reportedly used as human shields, were released on October 17 after junta troops left Se Gyi Taw village.³⁰

On October 16, residents of Thea Kone village and resistance forces found at least six bodies with signs of blunt force trauma on their heads after junta infantry raided the village in Yinmabin Township on October 15.³¹ At least three of the dead were under the age of 18, according to resistance members.³² The killings followed a clash between regime forces and a pro-junta militia against resistance fighters.³³ Members of a PDF in the area also said that one resistance member was decapitated after being captured by junta troops.³⁴

Around 66 military troops were killed from October 18-22 in Shan, Kayin and Mon States and Mandalay, Magway, Sagaing and Bago regions.³⁵ Around 45 of those troops were killed in a series of clashes in Ye Township, Mon State on October 20.³⁶

Following junta raids on October 25, five civilians were beaten to death by junta infantry in Madaya and Singu Townships, Mandalay Region.³⁷ A Singu resistance member said signs of torture were found on the bodies.³⁸

At least five civilians, including a child, were killed and five injured by Myanmar junta shelling in Magway Region on October 29, according to resistance groups.³⁹ Junta troops slaughtered at least 12 resistants of Depaying Township, leaving seven decapitated and eviscerated, during 10 days of attacks on resistance strongholds of Sagaing Region.⁴⁰ The decapitated bodies were found after a junta infantry battalion left the township on October 29.⁴¹ Two children were seriously injured and thousands of civilians fled their homes in Singu and Wetlet Townships, eastern Sagaing Region as Myanmar troops launched drone and arson attacks on October 30.⁴²

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Bangladeshi security agencies arrested an Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (“ARSA”) commander, Mohammad Ershad, also known as Noman Chowdhury, in connection with the killing of 14 Myanmar soldiers in Rakhine State in 2016 and the killing of a Bangladeshi intelligence officer during an anti-smuggling operation near Myanmar’s border on November 14, 2022.⁴³ Ershad was arrested at the Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox’s Bazar.⁴⁴ Ershad is also alleged to be the finance coordinator for ARSA commander-in-chief Ataulau Abu Ammar Jununi.⁴⁵

B. Corruption

Myanmar’s Supreme Court rejected appeals by Aung San Suu Kyi to overturn six corruption convictions.⁴⁶ Four of the convictions relate to Aung San Suu Kyi’s charity and two involved alleged funds received from property developer Maung Weik.⁴⁷

The junta’s former trade chief, ex-Lieutenant General Moe Myint Tun, and his assistant, ex-Brigadier General Yan Naung Soe, have received life imprisonment terms equivalent to 20 years in prison for corruption charges.⁴⁸ According to junta media sources, Moe Myint Tun, who has been removed from the State Administration Council, abused his position for personal benefit in violation of economic policies and committed high treason by going against the roadmap and objectives of the regime, adding that he took bribes from companies and illegally held foreign currencies.⁴⁹ The regime said that Yan Naung Soe personally benefited from violating the economic policies of the state and committed betrayal of the state and treason together with Moe Myint Tun by also exchanging foreign currency for Myanmar kyat for businesspersons by using his rank.⁵⁰ The *Irrawaddy* reports that the Myanmar regime is also planning to prosecute business owners, including Thein Win Zaw and Mu Mu Shein, in connection with Moe Myint Tun’s activities.⁵¹ Thein Win Zaw, who reportedly has close ties to junta chief Min Aung Hlaing’s family, is the owner of Shwe Byain Phyu Co., which has interests in gas stations, gem mining, telecoms and logging and is one of the regime’s top taxpayers.⁵² Mu Mu Shein is an executive director of Moon Sun Energy Co.⁵³

The *Irrawaddy* reports that Myanmar’s military regime is questioning former deputy prime minister and home affairs minister Lieutenant-General Soe Htut, his wife Nilar Sein and their two sons on suspicion of corruption.⁵⁴ Soe Htut, his wife and sons are accused of violating legal and financial procedures in inviting tenders for government-funded projects and taking bribes from business owners.⁵⁵

C. International Community / Sanctions

In a scathing report issued in early October, the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar said that United Nations (“UN”) member states, Security Council and General Assembly are failing to act: “The UN Country Team is pursuing the same failed approach of appeasing the military despite growing risks and ever-fewer results, while UN Secretary-General António

Guterres has neglected his responsibilities to the Myanmar people as head of the UN Secretariat.”⁵⁶

An attack on a displacement camp in Kachin State attracted global condemnation, including from the UN and Myanmar’s civilian NUG⁵⁷ as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations⁵⁸ and the U.S. ambassador to the UN.⁵⁹ A group of former UN experts on Myanmar called on UN member states to hold the Myanmar junta responsible for the atrocities.⁶⁰

Myanmar’s ambassador to the UN, appointed prior to the military coup, called on the UN Security Council to rely on the premise of universal jurisdiction to take decisive action against the junta and hold them accountable for current and former atrocities.⁶¹

Activists have launched an online petition campaign to pressure Singapore’s government to block the junta’s access to funds, arms, equipment and jet fuel.⁶² Singapore is the third-largest supplier of arms and equipment to the junta.⁶³

German prosecutors are probing leading exporter ND SatCom for supplying communications equipment to Myanmar’s junta after sanctions were imposed.⁶⁴ ND SatCom GmbH manufactures satellite-based broadband VSAT modems and broadcast, government and defense communication networks.⁶⁵ The criminal investigation follows a complaint filed by Germany Solidarity with Myanmar Democracy based on Justice For Myanmar (“JFM”) research.⁶⁶ ND SatCom has allegedly provided significant support for the military’s satellite communications since 2016, including 5G satellite hardware and software for use in the military’s Meikhtila system, including battlefield networks.⁶⁷ Terabit Wave Company Limited in Myanmar brokered the purchase of the equipment in partnership with the Vietnamese firm, OSB Investment and Technology.⁶⁸ ND SatCom appointed Terabit Wave as its dealer to sell satellite communications equipment in Myanmar and to negotiate and sign contracts.⁶⁹ The authorization was part of a 2019 contract between Terabit Wave and the directorate involving Terabit’s joint venture with OSB, Com and Com Company Limited, which was leaked to JFM.⁷⁰

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

According to an annual report released on October 4 by Freedom House, Myanmar is the world’s second most repressive environment for internet freedom in the world, ranking only above China.⁷¹ Since the coup in February 2021, the junta has consistently targeted online platforms and social media channels by imposing internet shutdowns, blocking access to social media platforms like Facebook, imposing restrictions on virtual private networks (VPNs) that can bypass internet censorship, and conducting online surveillance to control and monitor online activities.⁷² According to the report, scores of internet users have been imprisoned for their online activities during the report’s coverage period of June 1, 2022 to May 31, 2023.⁷³ Military courts have issued multi-year prison sentences and carried out executions in some cases, the report noted.⁷⁴ “In the most egregious case from the coverage period, the military executed prominent activist Kyaw Min Yu, better known as Ko Jimmy, in July 2022, after arresting him for pro-democracy social media posts,” it said.⁷⁵ The report notes that the Myanmar army and its

informants use Telegram groups to share information on dissidents, allowing the authorities to identify, detain and in some cases forcibly disappear them.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the report states that the junta frequently enforces short-term, localized internet shutdowns to prevent the opposition from organizing or sharing information about atrocities, effectively restricting internet access for millions of users.⁷⁷

Myanmar's regime announced that it has formed a committee, headed by deputy junta chief Soe Win, to build a national database to monitor citizens and identify its opponents.⁷⁸ The database will be an electronic identification system.⁷⁹ Wai Phyo Myint, Myanmar's head of Access Now, a global advocacy group for digital rights, said, "The national database has immigration data. The regime can match the information on household registration certificates, citizenship IDs and passports. This makes it easy for the regime to identify a person, their address, family and networks. ... It requires people to register their SIM cards to reveal their contacts from the telecoms operator. If an activist is arrested, all their contacts can also be seized."⁸⁰ She added: "The junta traces our digital footprints. And it has been building a database to find out all the information about individuals in a few seconds. This digital coup is taking shape, and we must work to prevent the regime from getting the technology to make it happen."⁸¹

The head of Sagaing's Monywa Prison and four subordinates have been dismissed over the September hunger strike by political prisoners, according to the Monywa People's Strike Committee.⁸² The political prisoners launched the protest on September 8 after military and police intelligence personnel searched their cells and seized food, medicines, clothes, books and other possessions.⁸³ The hunger strikers ended the protest after six days when prison staff agreed to return their medicine, food, clothes and books.⁸⁴ However, nine political prisoners were punished with year-long suspensions of their right to reduced sentences.⁸⁵ Prison authorities also prosecuted 17 political prisoners under Section 147 (unlawful protest) of the penal code, according to the Monywa People's Strike Committee.⁸⁶ The charge carries a maximum two years in prison.

On October 28, retired colonel Ye Htut was arrested and charged with incitement under §505(a) for allegedly spreading false news on Facebook.⁸⁷ Ye Htut was information minister and presidential spokesperson in Myanmar's previous military-backed government. Since the 2021 coup, Ye Htut has traveled around Myanmar, sharing his encounters with locals and documenting people's everyday struggles.⁸⁸ Ye Htut also allegedly posted information on Facebook about a junta crony named Nyan Lwin Aung shortly before his assassination in Yangon on October 2 by an anti-junta guerilla group.⁸⁹ Pro-junta groups have accused Ye Htut of facilitating the assassination, and this incident is believed to be the immediate cause of his arrest.⁹⁰

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

On October 17, *Myanmar Witness* published a report "Pro-SAC Digital Offensive," detailing doxxing and arrests of social media users following the deadly airstrikes on Pa Zi Gyi village in Kanbalu Township.⁹¹ After the airstrikes, social media users in Myanmar engaged in a "black profile" campaign and posted content condemning the attack.⁹² During the social media

campaign, doxxing increased on pro-junta Telegram channels.⁹³ Between April 13 and 30, state-owned newspaper *Myanma Alinn* announced 68 arrests related to social media use.⁹⁴ *Myanmar Witness* confirmed that 11 of those individuals were previously doxxed on pro-junta Telegram channels.⁹⁵ Reportedly, pro-junta channels coordinated with each other and agents on the ground to trigger the arrests.⁹⁶

On October 30, *The Irrawaddy* published an interview with ethnographer and documentary photographer Khin Sandar Nyunt, who recently participated in a photography exhibit in Chiang Mai, Thailand.⁹⁷ Khin Sandar Nyunt was forced to leave Yangon in 2021 because the regime was targeting documentary photographers. She moved to Kayah State, where she has been documenting health care organizations and makeshift hospitals supporting resistance fighters.⁹⁸ Khin Sandar Nyunt intends to use photography to shed light on the conflict: “I want people from outside to be more aware of the organizations struggling in Kayah State. I want people to be aware of how devastating and inhumane air raids are.”⁹⁹

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

The Myanmar Investment Commission (“MIC”) approved six new investment projects from the power, manufacturing, hotel and tourism sectors.¹⁰⁰ The MIC stated that these projects are expected to inject over 314.73 billion kyats into the country, adding that eight existing businesses were also allowed to expand their capital.¹⁰¹

Thailand’s oil and gas giant PTT Exploration and Production (“PTTEP”) is seeking to extend its two production-sharing contracts in Myanmar.¹⁰² One of the two production-sharing contracts will end in 2028 and the other will end in about 20 years. PTTEP is producing gas at the Zawtika and Yadana fields in Myanmar, which together account for about 50% of Myanmar’s gas consumption and about 20% of Thailand’s gas consumption.¹⁰³

The junta filed lawsuits against 16 executives from nine edible-oil importers for allegedly selling cooking oil at prices higher than the reference rate set by the regime.¹⁰⁴ The prosecutions came after some of the executives were detained and questioned in Naypyitaw in connection with the investigation into former junta’s trade chief Moe Myint Tun, who was convicted of corruption and sentenced to 20 years behind bars.¹⁰⁵

Myanmar’s trade deficit neared US\$1 billion in the first six months of fiscal 2023-2024 – up around 1,500% on the \$66 million recorded over the same period last year.¹⁰⁶ At a meeting with over 100 businesspeople in Yangon in October, Commerce Minister Tun Ohn urged attendees to boost exports while cutting imports to hit the regime’s export target of \$16.5 billion and import target of \$16 billion with total trade volume of \$32.5 billion for the remaining half of the fiscal year.¹⁰⁷ The minister said that exports were only at 46% of normal capacity, while import volume reached just 53% during the first six months of this fiscal year.¹⁰⁸ He said the drop in exports of rice, broken rice, green gram, sesame, rubber and garments was caused by falling demand from foreign buyers, muddled exchange rates and smuggling.¹⁰⁹ “It is the public who suffer the effect of these trade deficits since they are the end users. If [the junta] impose

pressures on traders, the traders will just adjust their prices according to the extra difficulties and costs of trading,” said economist U Moe.¹¹⁰

Myanmar’s passport offices are demanding that expats and sailors submit junta tax certificates when renewing their passports as the regime looks to boost foreign currency reserves.¹¹¹ In September, Min Aung Hlaing said migrants must pay at least 10% income tax on their foreign wages this fiscal year, which finishes on March 31.¹¹² Under the new taxation law, expats earning more than \$14,200 a year under the regime’s exchange rate will be required to pay a 25% tax.¹¹³ The move sparked a backlash in Thailand, which hosts up to 5 million migrant workers from Myanmar.¹¹⁴ The regime also demanded that expats remit at least 25% of their income through Myanmar’s junta-controlled banks from September 1.¹¹⁵ Remittances will be converted at the official 2,100 kyats per US dollar rate while the market rate is about 3,300 kyats.¹¹⁶

The Myanmar regime is offering electric vehicle import licenses as an incentive to Myanmar expats who remit US dollars to their home country.¹¹⁷ Myanmar expats, including sailors who earn a regular income in foreign countries, who remit \$200,000 or more in a year will be allowed to import an EV worth \$10,000.¹¹⁸ People who remit between \$50,000 and \$200,000 in a year will be allowed to import an EV worth \$2,500.¹¹⁹ Observers say there are few attractive options at the cited prices.¹²⁰ They also questioned the practicality of promoting EVs in a country plagued by serious power outages.¹²¹

During Russia’s Energy Week International Forum in mid-October, the junta’s energy minister, Ko Ko Lwin, has asked Russia to provide technology embedded with artificial intelligence to extract oil from wells in Myanmar that are nearing depletion.¹²² Ko Ko Lwin also discussed technology for collecting and analyzing data on sedimentary basins to identify new oil fields and for conducting 2D and 3D seismic surveys to identify potential oil and gas reserves.¹²³ Commentators say the regime is searching for new investment in the country’s oil and gas industry, which is the country’s largest source of foreign income.¹²⁴

According to the Commerce Ministry, border trade with Thailand through Kayin State’s Myawaddy crossing has plummeted by more than a third, or \$363 million, over the past five months from the same period last year.¹²⁵ Traders blame the junta’s frequent policy changes, red tape for import license applications and tighter checks at crossing.¹²⁶

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

Thailand’s PTTEP, the country’s oil and gas giant, is seeking to extend its production-sharing contracts in Myanmar to secure gas supply for both Thailand and Myanmar.¹²⁷ PTTEP currently produces gas from the Zawtika and Yadana fields, which account for roughly 50% of Myanmar’s consumption and 20% of Thailand’s consumption.¹²⁸ However, there have been widespread protests against PTTEP as the revenue generated by the contracts goes toward funding Myanmar’s military junta.¹²⁹ Human rights groups and Myanmar’s civilian NUG have called for PTTEP and other international players to exit Myanmar. Energy giants TotalEnergies and Chevron have already withdrawn from the Yadana project due to human rights concerns.¹³⁰ PTTEP aims to maintain energy security by extending its contracts despite the calls for divestment.¹³¹

China began surveying for a railway to Kyaukphyu on Myanmar’s Indian Ocean coast from Kunming in the southern Chinese province of Yunnan, according to Rakhine State residents.¹³² A former Rakhine State lawmaker for Kyaukphyu, Poe San, said the project lacks transparency and there has been no public consultation.¹³³ The railway is a major part of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (“CMEC”) and the wider Belt and Road Initiative (“BRI”) to link global markets with China.¹³⁴ The CMEC includes a special economic zone and a deep-sea port in Kyaukphyu, a Kyaukphyu-Kunming railway, and cross-border economic zones in Shan and Kachin States.¹³⁵

The Kachin Women’s Association Thailand is demanding that China halt its plan to accelerate its infrastructure investment in Myanmar through its BRI, saying Beijing “will find itself complicit in the mounting atrocities associated with the planned projects.”¹³⁶ The Kachin Women’s Association Thailand released a report detailing an escalation of conflict and human rights abuses in Kachin and northern Shan States since mid-2022 and says they are happening to “pave the way for BRI expansion.”¹³⁷ Rights abuses detailed in the report include air and artillery attacks on civilians, mass torching of villages, using civilians as human shields and gang rape.¹³⁸ “These projects should be canceled, and no new investments considered until the military regime is removed and elections held under a new federal democratic constitution, guaranteeing free, prior and informed consent of local communities to any new projects,” a press release accompanying the report said.¹³⁹

Russia’s state-run nuclear corporation Rosatom and the Myanmar regime’s Ministry of Science and Technology signed another agreement to build a small nuclear power plant as the junta continues to struggle to end blackouts.¹⁴⁰

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

A junta soldier was killed and five others, including a captain, were arrested in Momauk Township, Kachin State on September 30 when the Kachin Independence Army (“KIA”) ambushed a military unit from a junta base on Shan Htung Bum mountain, according to local media reports.¹⁴¹ The regime troops were ambushed while descending the mountain to obtain rations.¹⁴² The KIA also seized a junta base near Nam San Yang Village in Momauk Township on October 20.¹⁴³

The resistance group Cobra Column 2 Venom said it and other resistance groups, including the Karen National Liberation Army (“KNLA”), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (“KNU”), attacked a military outpost on a hill in Shwe Aye Myaing Village in Myawaddy Township, Kayin State on September 30.¹⁴⁴ Military casualties were unknown.¹⁴⁵

As of early October, fighting between junta troops and resistance forces continued along the main road between Hpruso and Bawlakhe Townships in eastern Kayah State, local residents and the Karenni National Defense Force (“KNDF”) said.¹⁴⁶ The KNDF and allied resistance forces have clashed with junta troops near Nan Phe and Htar Le villages since a junta convoy of nearly 100 vehicles arrived in Hpruso Township at the beginning of September.¹⁴⁷ The number of casualties among junta troops over the past month is unknown due to communication difficulties, the KNDF said.¹⁴⁸ However, the *Irrawaddy* reports that an estimated 320 resistance forces have been killed in the clashes.¹⁴⁹

On October 2, junta-affiliated militia members attacked a frontline KIA position in Tanai Township, Kachin State.¹⁵⁰ The KIA retreated and the outpost was torched.¹⁵¹ The KIA reportedly did not suffer any casualties but abandoned some weapons.¹⁵²

Clashes erupted between junta troops and the KIA and Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army - North (“SSPP/SSA-N”) in Theinni Township, northern Shan State on October 5, forcing hundreds of residents to flee.¹⁵³ Junta troops reportedly retreated, but additional clashes are anticipated.¹⁵⁴

On October 9, clashes were reported between the junta and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (“TNLA”) in Nawngkhio Township, northern Shan State, which resulted in at least three junta troop deaths.¹⁵⁵ Clashes were also reported between the junta and the TNLA in Mogoke Township, Mandalay Region on October 16.¹⁵⁶ On October 21, the TNLA tangled with junta troops in Mandalay’s Mogok Township.¹⁵⁷ The regime responded with airstrikes in the area.¹⁵⁸

On October 10, a military strike on an internally displaced persons (“IDP”) camp in northern Myanmar killed 29 people, according to a KIA spokesperson.¹⁵⁹ Thirteen children were among those killed and 57 people were also injured in the attack.¹⁶⁰ The camp is located in Mung Lai Hkyet Village, about two miles north of the headquarters of the KIA.¹⁶¹ Myanmar’s civilian NUG and the UN strongly condemned the strike, although the junta denied involvement and blamed an explosion at an ammonium nitrate store in a KIA training camp near the village.¹⁶² The KIA rejected this claim saying that it would never position a gunpowder warehouse near civilians.¹⁶³ An investigation by Amnesty International found that the junta’s military likely used a large aerial-delivered bomb in the attack.¹⁶⁴ The Arakan Army (“AA”) expressed solidarity with Kachin people following the strike and vowed to seek justice for the victims.¹⁶⁵ The AA went on to call the strike a war crime and a crime against humanity.¹⁶⁶

The junta and the KIA clashed in Kutkai and Hsenwi Townships in northern Shan State on October 11.¹⁶⁷ According to the KIA, five junta soldiers were killed.¹⁶⁸ On October 19, the KIA seized a junta military camp near the border with China in northern Shan State.¹⁶⁹ The KIA seized yet another junta base in Au Lan Pa Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State on October 24.¹⁷⁰

At least 16 Myanmar junta soldiers were killed and seven injured in the Kokang area of Shan State on October 14 when the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (“MNDAA”) attacked a military unit in the area.¹⁷¹

Two resistance fighters from the Chinland Defense Force and Chin National Army, the armed wing of the Chin National Front, were killed during a clash with regime forces in Thantlang Town, Chin State on October 12.¹⁷²

The AA, TNLA and MNDAA jointly launched simultaneous attacks on regime targets and bases in several towns in northern Shan State on October 26 and continued in the following days.¹⁷³ The MNDAA issued a statement announcing the launch of the operation, called Operation 1027, and said that it was aimed at rooting out the military dictatorship and protecting civilians from junta killings as well as building a federal democratic union with authentic self-administrative regions.¹⁷⁴ The ethnic groups simultaneously attacked regime targets in Kyaukme, Kutkai, Muse, Lashio, Namkham, Nawngkhio and Chin Shwe Haw in northern Shan State and the ruby mining area of Mogoke in upper Mandalay Region.¹⁷⁵ On October 30, the MNDAA blew up a Namtu River bridge outside Hseni, which is a key route for trade with China.¹⁷⁶ Junta jet fighters bombed nearby Ho Yint village, injuring three civilians and destroying five houses.¹⁷⁷ As of October 30, the ethnic armed groups said that they had seized 67 outposts and taken control of Chin Shwe Haw, a trade town near the Chinese border.¹⁷⁸ Also on October 30, Operation 1027 expanded into upper Sagaing Region.¹⁷⁹

On October 26, the KNLA and resistance allies attacked Myanmar regime offices in Kawkaeik, Kayin State.¹⁸⁰ A police station and military intelligence office were burned down and other buildings occupied.¹⁸¹

B. Peace Talks

On October 15, the Myanmar junta hosted representatives from ethnic armed groups to commemorate the eighth anniversary of the signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement (“NCA”).¹⁸² Represented groups included the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, the KNU/KNLA Peace Council, the Pa-O National Liberation Army, the Arakan Liberation Party, the Restoration Council of Shan State, the New Mon State Party, the Lahu Democratic Union, the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front and certain other ethnic groups that are not NCA signatories.¹⁸³ Three signatories of the NCA, the KNU, Chin National Front and All Burma Students’ Democratic Front, refused to participate in the meeting and jointly declared that the NCA is no longer valid because the junta has undermined its basic principles and repeatedly targeted civilians since its takeover.¹⁸⁴

Also on October 15, during talks with Min Aung Hlaing, China’s Special Envoy for Asian Affairs, Deng Xijun, expressed support for Myanmar’s peace process and said that Beijing would not accept any act that could break up the country.¹⁸⁵

- ¹ Rappler, October 26, 2023: <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/watch-myanmar-chin-state-people-sue-junta-war-crimes-philippines-jurisdiction/>.
- ² The Irrawaddy, October 25, 2023: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-nationals-file-case-against-junta-in-philippines.html>.
- ³ *Id.*
- ⁴ AP News, October 25, 2023: <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-philippines-war-crimes-ef8c9f3fcd4d06084412c57e94da730>.
- ⁵ Myanmar Now, October 25, 2023: <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/chin-refugees-request-criminal-investigation-of-myanmar-junta-officials-by-philippine-authorities/>.
- ⁶ The Irrawaddy, October 5, 2023: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/global-action-needed-to-end-myanmar-juntas-killing-of-children-civilian-govt.html>.
- ⁷ *Id.*
- ⁸ The Irrawaddy, October 14, 2023: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/at-least-56-women-and-girls-killed-by-myanmar-junta-in-three-months-report.html>.
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ *Id.*
- ¹² The Irrawaddy, October 6, 2023: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-jet-bombs-another-camp-for-internally-displaced-people.html>.
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