

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

NOVEMBER 2024 REPORT

Summary. This report reviews the November 2024 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar.

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I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

On November 28, the *Irrawaddy* reported that joint resistance groups claimed to have defeated a military unit of 80 troops enroute to the Karenni (Kayah) State capital Loikaw from southern Shan State.¹ The joint resistance groups included the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (“KNDF”) the Karenni Army (“KA”), the armed wing of the Karenni National Progressive Party, and the ethnic Pa-O National Defense Force.² According to a KA spokesperson, the regime forces were marching from Mobyet town in southern Shan State’s Pekon Township, to Loikaw.³ Colonel Hpone Naing of the KA reported that over 30 junta troops were killed in the fighting.⁴

According to the KNDF, on November 27, a junta regime base in Pekon town in southern Shan State shelled Kone Paw Village, killing six villagers, including a one-month-old infant, and injuring three others.⁵

On November 17, the civilian National Unity Government’s (“NUG”) defense ministry reported that anti-regime groups ambushed over 70 junta troops in western Madaya, killing 12 junta soldiers and seizing nine weapons.⁶ In response, the regime reportedly increased air and artillery strikes.⁷

According to anti-regime groups, since November 17, over 200 junta soldiers and Pyu Saw Htee militia allies have raided villages and dropped bombs along the Ayeyarwady River.⁸ A spokesperson from the Pyin Oo Lwin People’s Defense Force told the *Irrawaddy* that “Junta forces now control most of western Madaya along the river,” and that “[the Pyin Oo Lwin People’s Defense Force] withdrew as a temporary, tactical move.”⁹

On November 8, junta regime fighter jets bombed Kone Paw Village, killing two villagers.¹⁰

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

On November 27, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (“ICC”) announced that he was seeking an arrest warrant for junta boss Min Aung Hlaing for crimes against humanity linked to the alleged persecution and deportations committed against the Rohingya.¹¹ In response to this announcement, China’s foreign ministry stated that the ICC must be “just and fair” and exercise its duty “prudently,”¹² even going so far as to suggest that the court has no jurisdiction over acts committed by nationals of non-state parties on the territory of a non-state party unless referred to it by the UN Security Council.¹³ The Bangladesh government, through its high representative of Rohingya affairs of the Bangladesh interim government, said that the arrest warrant was a step towards ensuring justice and accountability.¹⁴

On November 30, 116 Rohingya refugees, primarily women and children, were rescued off the coast of Indonesia’s Aceh province after their boat nearly sank.¹⁵ Fishermen in the area, witnessing the vessel in distress, intervened to save the passengers from drowning.¹⁶ The boat sustained severe damage and was found half-submerged just 100 meters from the shoreline.¹⁷

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (“UNHCR”) announced during the week of November 18 that it launched a \$10 billion appeal for 2025 to “meet critical needs and implement sustainable solutions for millions of refugees, displaced persons and stateless people worldwide,” including Rohingya refugees.¹⁸ UNHCR anticipates that, in 2025, the Asia Pacific region could face increased displacement due to conflict, persecution, climate change impacts and other disasters.¹⁹ It projects a rise in the complexity and scale of emergencies, compounded by diminishing donor support, which threatens to fall short of escalating needs.²⁰ In response, UNHCR will focus on fulfilling the pledges from the Global Refugee Forum, including commitments from states to strengthen protections and find solutions for stateless Rohingya populations.²¹

Malaysia, which hosts the highest number of Myanmar refugees among ASEAN member states, particularly from the Rohingya community, is set to leverage its ASEAN chairmanship in 2025 to address this critical issue, said Malaysian Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.²² He stated that Malaysia would maintain its advocacy for refugee welfare and push for a pragmatic regional approach to the crisis.²³ “As the Chair of ASEAN in 2025, Malaysia holds the responsibility to spearhead ASEAN’s efforts in addressing the crisis in Myanmar,” he noted.²⁴

An eleven-member delegation from the United States Congress arrived in Cox’s Bazar on November 26 to visit Rohingya refugee camps and assess the conditions of the refugees.²⁵ The delegation was led by Democratic Congressman Ed Case and Republican Congressman Richard McCormick.²⁶

B. Corruption

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

C. International Community / Sanctions

On November 5, the NUG Foreign Affairs Minister, Zin Mar Aung, warned China that putting pressure on anti-regime groups is not the answer to Myanmar’s political problems.²⁷ She further stated that the NUG understands China’s desire for peace and stability along the border, but China should also understand that Myanmar’s issues cannot be resolved with short-term solutions.²⁸

During a session of the International Labour Organization (“ILO”) Governing Body in Geneva from October 28 to November 7, the ILO decided to take action against the Myanmar junta for rights violations under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution.²⁹ Under Article 33, the ILO can impose economic sanctions and international legal proceedings on member states that fail to comply with the recommendations from the ILO Commission of Inquiry.³⁰ On November 6, the ILO said that the junta failed to adhere to a resolution adopted in June 2021 and recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry for Myanmar in 2023.³¹ The ILO Governing Body will discuss a draft resolution regarding punitive measures at its next session in March 2025, and a final decision will be made at the ILO Conference in June 2025.³²

On November 6, Chinese Premier Li Qiang reaffirmed Beijing’s support for the Myanmar military regime.³³ This reaffirmation followed the Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in China where Li Qiang pledged China’s commitment to regional stability, stressing the importance of trade and border security, and promised China’s ongoing cooperation to advance Myanmar’s political reconciliation and transformation.³⁴

On November 7, a report from the United Nations Development Programme estimated that more than two million people in Rakhine State could be at risk of starvation as the Rakhine economy had “stopped functioning” because of the civil war.³⁵ The report further warned that “Rakhine stands on the precipice of an unprecedented disaster.”³⁶

On November 15, Min Aung Hlaing welcomed Head of the Republic of Buryatia, Russian Federation Alexey Sambuevich Tsydenov in Naypyitaw.³⁷ Tsydenov, who is currently sanctioned by the United States for forcibly conscripting citizens to fight in Ukraine, met with Min Aung Hlaing to discuss cooperative initiatives, including the exchange of goodwill visits between Myanmar and Russia.³⁸

Also on November 15, the governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom filed a joint declaration of intervention in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice.³⁹ In their joint statement, the six nations reaffirmed their commitment to accountability and the international legal order and stressed the Court’s vital role in the peaceful settlement of disputes.⁴⁰

On November 20, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (“ICBL”) announced that landmines and unexploded munitions claimed more victims in Myanmar than in any other country in 2023 with over 1,000 killed or wounded.⁴¹ The ICBL further said that there is evidence of junta troops forcing civilians to walk in front of its units to “clear” mine-affected areas.⁴² To date, Myanmar is not a signatory to the United Nations convention that prohibits the use, stockpiling or development of anti-personnel mines.⁴³

On November 26, the acting president of the NUG called on all NUG ministers living abroad to return to Myanmar to avoid becoming a government in exile.⁴⁴ He further commented that the NUG had “spent more than enough time engaging with the international community” and urged government members abroad to focus their efforts within the country.⁴⁵

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

On November 13, *Radio Free Asia* reported that Myanmar’s junta would be cancelling some passports renewed abroad in Seoul, South Korea.⁴⁶ After the coup in 2021, members of the deposed elected National Unity Government (“NUG”) established their own administrative centers outside of Myanmar.⁴⁷ However, the junta controls Myanmar’s official embassy in Seoul, where it will refuse to renew passports unless the applicant agrees to abstain from participation in politics or allows the junta to conduct a background check of their family.⁴⁸ Myanmar nationals have reportedly been using the NUG consulate in Seoul for passport renewal to avoid these restrictions.⁴⁹ But the junta-controlled embassy has stated that passports renewed at the NUG embassy will be cancelled and the bearers may be punished.⁵⁰ Myanmar’s junta-

backed consulate is also refusing to renew some passports that bear South Korea’s humanitarian G1-99 visa.⁵¹ South Korea extended the humanitarian visa program to Myanmar nationals in South Korea after the 2021 coup.⁵² For the time being, NUG-renewed passports are honored for international travel out of South Korea.⁵³ But their bearers cannot return home.⁵⁴

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

On October 25, the military regime confiscated the home of Ko Ko Zaw, the Editor-In-Chief of *Than Lwin Times* in Mawlamyine, Mon State.⁵⁵ The junta reportedly accused him of having ties to “terrorist groups.”⁵⁶ According to Ko Ko Zaw, “[w]e are not impacted by this [action] as we have been an online media since 2018. But they tried to arrest me and harm my family.”⁵⁷ In 1997, the previous military regime confiscated Ko Ko Zaw’s family-owned private business and printing house and imprisoned him and his father.⁵⁸

On November 14, photojournalist Kyaw Swar Tun was released from Yangon’s Insein Prison after serving more than two years behind bars.⁵⁹ Kyaw Swar Tun was working in *Mizzima*’s fact-checking department when he was arrested in Yangon in September 2022.⁶⁰ In January 2023, he was convicted under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code, which criminalizes the spread of fake news and incitement.⁶¹ While he was in prison, prison guards allegedly isolated, beat and tortured him when they learned he was a journalist.⁶² Kyaw Swar Tun previously worked for *Mizzima*, *Myanmar Pressphoto Agency* and *7Day TV*.⁶³

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

On October 22, the Myanmar junta formed a working committee to prepare a memorandum of understanding to establish a security company in coordination with China to ensure the safety of Chinese projects and personnel in Myanmar.⁶⁴ The working committee is chaired by the deputy home affairs minister and includes the deputy police chief and defense, communications and transport ministry officials.⁶⁵ The security company, once formed, is intended to handle the import of weapons and special equipment, including communications devices and restricted tools.⁶⁶

The junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, reportedly met with several Chinese businesspersons during his visit to China in early November.⁶⁷ He reportedly discussed the development of the Myanmar regime’s Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise, the electronic vehicle sector, and opportunities for foreign direct investment.⁶⁸ He reportedly invited investment for the development of the electric power sector in Myanmar and said that the development of the electric power sector was the topmost priority among ten investment sectors in the country.⁶⁹ During his trip, Min Aung Hlaing visited the BYD electric vehicle (“EV”) headquarters in Shenzhen, China.⁷⁰ His son, Aung Pyae Sone, imports the cars to Myanmar.⁷¹ Since the coup, the junta has granted special privileges to EVs and their batteries, which are exempt from import taxes imposed on other items like fuel, cooking oil and medicines.⁷² Other imports also require the approval of the junta-controlled Foreign Exchange Supervisory Committee.⁷³

Myanmar received more than US\$43 million in foreign investment from China in the past seven months of the current financial year 2024-2025, beginning April 1, according to a release from the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.⁷⁴ Chinese companies reportedly primarily made investments in the manufacturing sector.⁷⁵ Singapore is the leading foreign investor in Myanmar, with US\$87.74 million of foreign direct investment in the past seven months of the current financial year, followed by Thailand and China.⁷⁶ The Myanmar Investment Commission gave the green light to 33 foreign projects from seven countries representing investments of over US\$220 million in the past seven months.⁷⁷

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

During a meeting between the respective governments of Myanmar and China in Kunming at the beginning of November, Chinese Premier Li emphasized Chinese commitment to regional stability, stressing importance of trade and border security.⁷⁸ The Chinese Premier also highlighted China’s commitment to the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (“CMEC”) under the Belt and Road Initiative, viewing it as a key project for both nations. As reported by the *Voice of America*, the CMEC links the Chinese province of Yunnan with economic hubs in Myanmar and gives China access to the India Ocean through a series of infrastructure projects.⁷⁹

The *Irrawaddy* reports that the Kachin Independence Army (“KIA”), the armed wing of the Kachin Independence Organization, is allegedly preparing to resume rare earth mining operations in the Pangwa-Chipwi area of Kachin State, known as one of Myanmar’s rare earth hubs. The town was seized by the KIA in October, and it is home to rare earth mines, mostly operated by Chinese businessmen.⁸⁰

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

The *Irrawaddy* reported on November 1 that the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (“TNLA”) and allied Mandalay PDF troops have encircled around 100 junta troops attempting to regain control of an intersection linking northern Shan State with Mandalay Region on the Mandalay-Lashio road in northern Shan State.⁸¹ More than 2,000 people from neighboring villages have been displaced by the fighting.⁸² They are taking shelter in forests and villages far from the fighting.⁸³

Myanmar’s military launched airstrikes on Mogoke in northern Mandalay Region on November 11 and 12, marking the first attack on the town since it was seized by the TNLA and allies in July.⁸⁴ The bombing targeted civilian areas, killing residents and damaging infrastructure, according to locals and the TNLA.⁸⁵

The KIA seized the Border Guard Force Battalion 1001 headquarters in Chipwi Township, which was the junta militia’s final stronghold on the Chinese border.⁸⁶ In October,

China blocked border gates with Kachin State and, during a recent meeting, told the KIA to stop fighting the regime.⁸⁷ But the KIA and Kachin PDF allies seized the battalion headquarters near Phimaw town on the Chinese border on October 31 after three days of attacks, according to Kachin media.⁸⁸ The KIA and its allies also seized Phimaw town on November 2⁸⁹ and Kanpiketi on November 20, both of which are located on the Chinese border.⁹⁰ Over 300 Myanmar military soldiers who fled Kanpiketi after the KIA captured the town were handed back to the Myanmar regime by China in Muse, Shan State on November 23.⁹¹

On November 8, Myanmar troops launched a counterattack to reclaim the Light Infantry Battalion 437 in Momauk town, Kachin State, after it was captured by the KIA.⁹² A KIA spokesman said that junta forces launched airstrikes and artillery strikes as troops in armored vehicles advanced.⁹³

Fighting between the Arakan Army (“AA”) and the Myanmar military has been reported in Maungdaw, Gwa, Taungup and Ann Townships in Rakhine State.⁹⁴ In Ann and Gwa, the AA seized battalion headquarters and outposts on November 6.⁹⁵ Residents also say that clashes and daily airstrikes from the Myanmar military have been reported in Taungup during the week of November 4.⁹⁶ Fighting in Maungdaw has additionally been reported as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army coordinates with the junta to repel the AA offensive.⁹⁷

The Karen National Liberation Army (“KNLA”) and allied resistance forces seized the Myanmar military’s Kuseik base, which is crucial for the defense of Papun town in Karen State, on November 9.⁹⁸ A spokesman for the KNLA said, “The base is crucial for the regime, which has deployed troops there since the revolution began. The base was then fortified and designed as a command center for operations to gain territorial control in the area.”⁹⁹

The Myanmar military is deploying warplanes, drones, and artillery to repel offensives by the Chin Brotherhood Alliance (“CBA”) in Falam and Mindat towns in Chin State.¹⁰⁰ The Chin Brotherhood Alliance consists of the Zomi Federal Union, Chin National Organization, Mindat Chin National Council, Maraland and Kampelet Chin Defense Forces and Matupi CDF Brigade 1. In Mindat, regime troops have torched houses in several parts of town including near the police station, according to the CBA.¹⁰¹

Over 80 Myanmar military soldiers escaped from prison in Lashio, Shan State, which is held by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (“MNDAA”), in the last week of October.¹⁰² “They scaled the prison wall at midnight. I heard they used the phones of prison guards to contact the outside,” a Lashio resident said.¹⁰³ “I think it happened because MNDAA personnel did not know prison procedures well and security wasn’t good enough.”¹⁰⁴

The United Wa State Army (“UWSA”) is organizing a militia group in Hopang Township, northern Shan State to coordinate with its newly established administration of the region.¹⁰⁵ The township was seized by the Brotherhood Alliance in early 2024 and subsequently handed over to the UWSA to govern.¹⁰⁶ The group intends to recruit several hundred men, aged 18-40, for the militia group.¹⁰⁷

Thailand deployed additional troops on the Myanmar border to pressure the UWSA to withdraw from bases that allegedly encroach on Thai territory.¹⁰⁸ Thai media reported on

November 26 that tensions are growing in Pai District of Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province after the UWSA reportedly reinforced the bases with more troops and weaponry.¹⁰⁹ The Thai army has stationed artillery near the bases to support Thai infantry units.¹¹⁰

The Bamar People's Liberation Army ("BPLA") says it wants to create an ethnically Bamar army in central Myanmar after gaining fighting experience in Karen and northern Shan states.¹¹¹ The BPLA chief commander, Maung Saungkha, told the *Irrawaddy*, "Our priority is to root out military dictatorship. But we will also speak out against other groups when necessary. We are not under the National Unity Government's command."¹¹²

B. Peace Talks

On November 6, the Myanmar junta announced via media the potential for peace talks under Chinese mediation with the Brotherhood Alliance, which is composed of the AA, MNDAA and TNLA.¹¹³ On November 25, the TNLA declared its readiness to engage in peace talks with the Myanmar junta and voiced the concern for the welfare of the people suffering from armed conflict in northern Shan State.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the TNLA underscored its commitment to the cessation of armed conflict through peace negotiations while retaining the right to self-defense.¹¹⁵ The MNDAA also agreed in October to temporarily pause a new round of offensives against the Myanmar junta.¹¹⁶

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- ³ *Id.*
- ⁴ *Id.*
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- ¹⁰ The Irrawaddy, November 28, 2024: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/karenni-resistance-prevents-myanmar-junta-army-unit-from-reaching-loikaw.html>.
- ¹¹ Reuters, November 27, 2024: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/reactions-icc-prosecutors-warrant-request-myanmar-military-leader-2024-11-27/>.
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- ²⁰ *Id.*
- ²¹ *Id.*
- ²² Borneo Bulletin, November 20, 2024: <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/malaysia-to-lead-asean-efforts-on-myanmar-refugee-crisis-in-asean-chairmanship/>.
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- ²⁴ *Id.*
- ²⁵ Dhaka Tribune, November 26, 2024: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/366304/us-congressional-delegation-visits-rohingya>.
- ²⁶ *Id.*
- ²⁷ The Irrawaddy, November 7, 2024: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-china-watch/china-unwise-to-pressure-groups-opposed-to-myanmar-junta-says-nug.html>.
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- ²⁹ The Irrawaddy, November 11, 2024: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmars-crisis-the-world/intl-labor-watchdog-to-take-action-against-myanmar-junta.html>.
- ³⁰ *Id.*
- ³¹ *Id.*
- ³² *Id.*
- ³³ Voice of America, November 8, 2024: <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-backs-myanmar-military-amid-growing-border-tensions/7857417.html>.
- ³⁴ *Id.*
- ³⁵ Al Jazeera, November 8, 2024: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/8/two-million-people-at-risk-of-starvation-in-myanmars-rakhine-un>.
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- ⁴³ *Id.*
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- ⁴⁶ Radio Free Asia, November 13, 2024: <https://www.rfa.org/english/myanmar/2024/11/13/myanmar-south-korea-passport/#:~:text=Myanmar's%20junta%20has%20announced%20that,be%20conscripted%20into%20the%20military.>
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- ⁴⁸ *Id.*
- ⁴⁹ *Id.*
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- ⁵³ *Id.*
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