

## STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

### MAY 2025 REPORT

**Summary.** This report reviews the May 2025 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar.

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## **I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance**

In the first half of May, there were reportedly over 58 junta airstrikes on civilian targets in resistance-held territory (including Rakhine, Chin, Kayin, Shan, Kayah and Mon States and Sagaing and Mandalay regions), killing at least 86 people and injuring over 200 others.<sup>1</sup>

The junta reportedly dropped two 250lb bombs on Mogoke town, destroying six houses on the night of May 2 and carried out an airstrike targeting Mogoke civilians in the morning of May 3.<sup>2</sup>

On May 6, the junta regime stated that it would extend its ceasefire until May 31 to aid reconstruction in earthquake-impacted areas.<sup>3</sup> Despite the ceasefire, junta airstrikes hit Hman Lal village in Natogyi Township on May 6, reportedly killing a 13-year-old girl and a 54-year-old man and injuring eight others.<sup>4</sup> On May 7, a Kawlin Township village in Sagaing Region was reportedly bombed by the junta military.<sup>5</sup>

A junta airstrike on a school in Depayin Township, Sagaing Region on May 5 killed 24 people, the majority of whom were students.<sup>6</sup> The junta military reportedly dropped a 500lb bomb on the school.<sup>7</sup> Around 30 other people were injured, with some in critical condition.<sup>8</sup>

On May 13, at least 13 civilians were reportedly killed, and more than 20 others injured after a junta jet bombed a village in Rakhine State's Rathedaung Township.<sup>9</sup>

The junta regime reportedly lost a military base on May 23 on the Thai border to KNDO resistance forces in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State.<sup>10</sup>

On May 25, the junta bombed a wedding in Kyunkyi village in Bago Region's Kyaukkyi Township, killing at least 10 civilians. Over 20 other people were also injured, with seven in critical condition.<sup>11</sup>

## **II. Political Developments**

### **A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis**

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees ("UNHCR") released a statement on May 23 expressing grave concern over reports that two boats carrying Rohingya refugees sank off the coast of Myanmar in May, with an estimated 427 people dead.<sup>12</sup> In the statement, Hai Kyung Jun, Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, warned that the worsening humanitarian situation exacerbated by funding cuts to UN agencies is pushing more Rohingya to risk dangerous sea journeys.<sup>13</sup> Deputy UN Spokesperson Farhan Haq highlighted during a press briefing that, with the annual monsoon season now underway, the perilous sea conditions reflect the desperation of those attempting to flee.<sup>14</sup> He also noted that so far this year, one in five people undertaking such sea journeys in the region has been reported dead or missing.<sup>15</sup>

The United Nations Children's Fund ("UNICEF") warned on May 31 that the education of around 230,000 Rohingya refugee children is under threat due to an acute and deepening

funding crisis.<sup>16</sup> UNICEF alleges that without immediate and sustained financial aid, support across all areas for the refugees is at risk, including critical foundational learning opportunities for children.<sup>17</sup> “The children we are speaking about are among the most vulnerable in the world,” said Rana Flowers, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh.<sup>18</sup> “We are doing everything possible to sustain critical education services, and UNICEF has been able to attract some other funding – but unfortunately there will be a delay in receiving this and thus UNICEF is forced to close learning facilities temporarily. Without urgent funding, the learning facilities may remain closed, and an entire generation of Rohingya children risk being left behind.”<sup>19</sup>

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia donated 667 metric tons of dates to the United Nations World Food Programme (“WFP”) to bolster nutrition support for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh.<sup>20</sup> The donation, facilitated through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, was officially made at a ceremony held in Dhaka on May 21.<sup>21</sup> The dates will be distributed to children attending learning centers as part of WFP's school feeding program, which currently supports 250,000 children across 3,500 centers in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.<sup>22</sup>

## **B. Corruption**

On May 26, the *Irrawaddy* reported that deputy governor of Myanmar’s Central Bank, Dr. Bo Bo Nge, was awarded the 2025 Laszlo Z. Bito Award for Humanitarian Service by Bard College.<sup>23</sup> Dr. Bo Bo Nge was arrested on February 11, 2021, following the military coup and allegedly was responsible for the loss of millions of kyat from the government budget by supervising banking transactions, permits and stamp duties.<sup>24</sup>

## **C. International Community / Sanctions**

On May 2, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk reported that the Myanmar military launched at least 243 attacks – including 171 airstrikes – since the March earthquake, despite announced unilateral ceasefires.<sup>25</sup> Türk called for an immediate halt of attacks on civilians, stating that “instead of further futile investment in military force, the focus must be on the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar.”<sup>26</sup>

On May 5, the United States imposed sanctions on a Myanmar militia, its leader and his two sons for facilitating cyber scams and human trafficking.<sup>27</sup>

The International Organization for Migration released its Myanmar Crisis Response Plan for 2025 on May 6, outlining its approach to addressing humanitarian needs in earthquake-affected regions.<sup>28</sup> The plan specifically targets areas under the state of emergency declared by the State Administrative Council, including Bago Region, Mandalay Region, Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory and Sagaing Region.<sup>29</sup>

Myanmar’s junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, met China’s President Xi Jinping on May 9 in Moscow on the sidelines of Russia’s Victory Day celebrations.<sup>30</sup> Xi pledged to support Myanmar in its rebuilding efforts following the March earthquake.<sup>31</sup> Xi also expressed his country’s support for Myanmar “pursuing development suited to its national conditions, safeguarding its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national stability,” while also

requesting “concrete measures to ensure the safety of Chinese personnel, institutions and projects in Myanmar.”<sup>32</sup>

On May 14, World Vision published its ninth situation update on the Myanmar earthquake response, announcing plans to support 500,000 people, including 85,057 boys and 86,902 girls, through both immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts.<sup>33</sup> The organization expressed deep concern for children affected by the disaster, who face increased risks, loss of learning opportunities and urgent protection needs.<sup>34</sup>

On May 15, Indian security forces killed 10 members of Myanmar’s Public Protection Team (a local defense force opposing the military junta) near the India-Myanmar border in Manipur’s Chandel district.<sup>35</sup> The Indian Army’s Eastern Command claimed the operation was in response to being “fired upon heavily by suspected cadres,” though Myanmar resistance sources disputed this account, alleging the members were detained before being killed.<sup>36</sup>

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (“ASEAN”) concluded talks on May 27 designed to jumpstart its peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar.<sup>37</sup> The regional body made a structural change by converting its Special Envoy to Myanmar from a rotating annual position to a permanent one, potentially on a three-year term.<sup>38</sup> Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan explained ASEAN’s decision to create a permanent envoy position, stating, “As it stands, we appoint a new special envoy every year, which means we have to start all over again each time.”<sup>39</sup>

### **III. Civil and Political Rights**

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

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

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

On World Press Freedom Day, May 3, *Democratic Voice of Burma* (“DVB”) highlighted the ongoing lack of press freedom in Myanmar.<sup>40</sup> Forty media workers, including seven women, are currently imprisoned, and seven have been killed by the junta.<sup>41</sup> Since the coup, at least eleven journalists have received sentences of ten years or more in prison.<sup>42</sup> “[They] torture, and impose excessive prison sentences. Some have even been killed. These are the most severe violations of press freedom,” Hein San, the editor of *Myaelatt Athan* told DVB.<sup>43</sup> In addition, the junta has revoked publication licenses of fifteen media groups.<sup>44</sup> Sixty-four media outlets have been forced to cover Myanmar from exile.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the Trump administration’s funding cuts have “effectively silenced” *Voice of America* and *Radio Free Asia*; and they have adversely affected the operations of *DVB*, *The Irrawaddy*, *Mizzima*, and *Narinjara News*.<sup>46</sup>

On April 3, Than Htike Myint was sentenced to five years in prison under § 52(a) of the Counterterrorism Law.<sup>47</sup> He allegedly had mobile phone contacts linked to members of the People’s Defense Force.<sup>48</sup> Junta soldiers arrested Than Htike Myint in February, when he returned to Myanmar from exile to visit his then-pregnant wife.<sup>49</sup> The soldiers allegedly tortured and interrogated him at 51st Light Infantry Battalion Base before taking him to a local police

station.<sup>50</sup> Now, he is imprisoned at Ayeyarwady region's Hinthada Prison.<sup>51</sup> Than Htike Myint has worked as a reporter for various news outlets including *Myaelatt Athan*, *DVB* and *Mizzima*.<sup>52</sup> International Federation of Journalists and Committee to Protect Journalists issued statements strongly condemning his sentence.<sup>53</sup>

#### **IV. Economic Development**

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

In response to an inquiry by civil society groups from Myanmar and Japan, Kamigumi Co., Ltd., Sumitomo Corporation and Toyota Tsusho stated that they have begun liquidation procedures and are preparing to exit the Thilawa Multipurpose International Terminal in Thanlyin Township, Yangon.<sup>54</sup> The terminal was developed by Japan's Official Development Assistance and is operated in partnership with the Ever Flow River Group, a company linked to the military-owned conglomerate Myanma Economic Holdings Limited, which is under international sanctions.<sup>55</sup>

Junta-owned Myanmar Oil and Natural Gas Enterprise and Thailand's Gulf Petroleum Myanmar ("GPM") signed a product-sharing contract in Naypyitaw on May 29 for offshore natural gas production.<sup>56</sup> Gulf Petroleum Myanmar is a subsidiary of Thailand's Northern Gulf Petroleum, which it operates in partnership with the SMART Group of Companies, established under the former Myanmar dictatorship to service the military-controlled petroleum industry.<sup>57</sup> GPM's leadership includes Kyaw Kyaw Hlaing, the chair and director of the SMART Group.

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

Myanmar is inviting foreign investors to help with redevelopment efforts, two months after the devastating earthquake on May 28 destroyed many bridges, schools, factories and other types of critical infrastructure.<sup>58</sup>

Several infrastructure projects involving foreign investors have been recently abandoned, including the off-take station for Chinese oil and gas pipelines in Mandalay Region, which was halted after eight resistance attacks.<sup>59</sup>

##### **C. Land Seizure**

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

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

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

On May 9, junta forces reportedly captured at least eight Ta'ang National Liberation Army ("TNLA") outposts in Nawnghkio Township, northern Shan State on May 1.<sup>60</sup> Four civilians were killed during the attack.<sup>61</sup>

The Karen National Union (“KNU”) seized the junta’s Hteekhee base on May 9 after eight days of fighting.<sup>62</sup> On May 19, the KNU seized a junta base near the Thai border in Kayin State.<sup>63</sup> During the fight, over 200 civilians reportedly fled into Thailand.<sup>64</sup>

Fighting continued in May between Chin anti-regime forces and advancing Myanmar junta forces in northern Chin State.<sup>65</sup> On May 18, around 800 junta troops, led by a divisional commander, were halted by resistance attacks near Mualpi.<sup>66</sup> The Kale People’s Defense Force reportedly captured nine junta soldiers, while at least 20 more soldiers deserted.<sup>67</sup>

On May 20, two of three helicopters sending reinforcements and supplies to the junta’s embattled 21<sup>st</sup> Military Operations Command headquarters in Bhamo were shot down by the Kachin Independence Army (“KIA”), although the junta claimed that the crashes were due to “mechanical failure.”<sup>68</sup> The current battle for Bhamo has been ongoing for more than five months since the KIA and allied forces launched an onslaught on the town on December 4, 2024.<sup>69</sup>

On May 26, the junta’s Brigadier General Kyaw Myo Aung and an army captain were shot by Arakan Army (“AA”) marksmen in fighting around the port of Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State.<sup>70</sup> The fighting was reported around Pyaing Si Kay village on the Kyaukphyu-Ramree road, with the AA reportedly seizing several junta positions that defended a police battalion headquarters.<sup>71</sup>

On May 30, the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of Karen National Union, and allied People’s Defense Forces seized the junta’s strategic Bayint Naung mountain outpost, the highest peak overlooking the border trade hub of Myawaddy in Kayin State.<sup>72</sup> The junta’s Waw Lay outpost, located two hours further south in Myawaddy Township, reportedly fell the same day despite junta air and artillery support.<sup>73</sup> Resistance fighters also reportedly captured the nearby Bledo base on May 23 and a junta base at Kanel Lay in Kawkaik Township, Kayin State on May 28.<sup>74</sup>

## **B. Peace Talks**

On April 28-29, China hosted peace talks in Kunming between Myanmar’s military junta and the TNLA, with China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs special envoy Deng Xijun mediating the discussions.<sup>75</sup> China reportedly exerted pressure on the TNLA not to claim territory captured from the military junta.<sup>76</sup> The TNLA spokesperson stated they would not relinquish control of such areas, despite Chinese pressure, highlighting China’s ongoing role in attempting to shape the outcome of Myanmar’s civil war while maintaining its economic interests in the region.<sup>77</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 17, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/58-myanmar-junta-airstrikes-target-civilians-in-two-weeks.html>.
- <sup>2</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 3, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-china-watch/myanmar-junta-bombs-tnla-territory-after-peace-talks-fail.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 7, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-extends-quake-truce-while-continuing-airstrikes.html>.
- <sup>4</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>6</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 12, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/at-least-11-schoolkids-massacred-in-myanmar-junta-air-raid-in-sagaing.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>9</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 14, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/at-least-13-dead-in-myanmar-junta-airstrike-on-residential-area-in-rakhine.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 26, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/karen-resistance-captures-another-junta-base-on-thai-border.html>.
- <sup>11</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 26, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/at-least-10-killed-as-myanmar-junta-bombs-kyaukkyi-wedding.html>.
- <sup>12</sup> UNHCR, May 23, 2025: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1163661>.
- <sup>13</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>16</sup> UNICEF, May 31, 2025: <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/press-releases/education-almost-quarter-million-rohingya-refugee-children-risk-unicef-calls-urgent>.
- <sup>17</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>20</sup> The Business Standard, May 22, 2025: <https://www.tbsnews.net/rohingya-crisis/saudi-arabia-donates-667-tonnes-dates-support-rohingya-refugee-children-1149081>.
- <sup>21</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>22</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>23</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 26, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/detained-myanmar-central-bank-deputy-wins-humanitarian-award.html>.
- <sup>24</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>25</sup> UN News, May 2, 2025: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/05/1162881>.
- <sup>26</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>27</sup> Reuters, May 6, 2025: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-issues-new-myanmar-related-sanctions-treasury-dept-website-shows-2025-05-05/>.
- <sup>28</sup> UN Migration Global Crisis Response Platform, May 6, 2025: <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/myanmar-crisis-response-plan-2025>.
- <sup>29</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>30</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 10, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmar-china-watch/myanmar-junta-chief-meets-chinas-xi-for-first-time-state-media.html>; Myanmar Now, May 12, 2025: <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/myanmar-junta-chief-meets-chinas-xi-for-first-time-since-coup/>.
- <sup>31</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>33</sup> Reliefweb, May 17, 2025: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-earthquake-situation-update-edition-9>.
- <sup>34</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>35</sup> The Diplomat, May 20, 2025: <https://thediplomat.com/2025/05/indian-security-forces-massacre-burmese-resistance-functionaries/>.
- <sup>36</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>37</sup> Vatican News, May 27, 2025: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-05/myanmar-faith-hope-in-suffering-report-of-fides.html>; Persecution.org, May 27, 2025: <https://www.persecution.org/2025/05/27/asean-tweaks-its-engagement-with-myanmar-amid-ongoing-conflict/>.
- <sup>38</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>39</sup> Reuters, May 26, 2025: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/southeast-asian-leaders-seek-myanmar-peace-progress-trade-strategies-2025-05-25/>; Persecution.org, May 27, 2025: <https://www.persecution.org/2025/05/27/asean-tweaks-its-engagement-with-myanmar-amid-ongoing-conflict/>.
- <sup>40</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma, May 3, 2025: [Myanmar media faces severe restrictions and funding challenges on World Press Freedom Day - DVB](#).
- <sup>41</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Id.*

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> Mizzima, May 5, 2025: [Reporters' group calls for release of Myanmar journalist jailed for 5 years – ENG.MIZZIMA.COM](#).

<sup>48</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma, May 6, 2025: [Myanmar: Junta sentences journalist to five years in jail - DVB](#).

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, May 2, 2025: [Myanmar journalist Than Htike Myint sentenced to 5 years in prison for terrorism - Committee to Protect Journalists](#); International Federation of Journalists, May 6, 2025: [Myanmar: Junta sentences journalist to five years in jail - IFJ](#).

<sup>54</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 15, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/economy/three-japanese-firms-ditch-myanmar-port-project.html>.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 30, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/thai-firm-signs-up-for-another-offshore-natural-gas-project-in-myanmar.html>.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> The Star, May 31, 2025: <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2025/05/31/earthquake-hit-myanmar-invite-foreign-investor-for-rebuilding>.

<sup>59</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 16, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmar-junta-abandons-chinese-pipeline-amid-resistance-attacks.html>.

<sup>60</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 9, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmar-junta-seizes-eight-tnla-positions.html>.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*

<sup>62</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 9, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/knu-hails-seizure-of-myanmar-junta-base-okjhkn-thai-border.html>.

<sup>63</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 20, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/knu-seizes-myanmar-junta-base-on-thai-border.html>.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 28, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/chin-resistance-blocks-myanmar-junta-advance.html>.

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 21, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/two-myanmar-junta-choppers-down-in-battle-for-kachins-bhamo.html>.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

<sup>70</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 30, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/aa-kills-myanmar-junta-general-near-kyaukphyu.html>.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> The Irrawaddy, May 30, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/karen-offensive-seizes-a-dozen-junta-bases-along-myanmar-thai-border.html>.

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*

<sup>74</sup> *Id.*

<sup>75</sup> Radio Free Asia, May 5, 2025: <https://www.rfa.org/english/myanmar/2025/05/05/myanmar-taang-army-territory-chinese-pressure/>.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*