STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

JUNE 2025 REPORT

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

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I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

On June 2, the Myanmar junta extended its post-earthquake truce until June 30. In a statement, the junta stated that the ceasefire would allow the country to hold a "free and fair multiparty democracy general election."

According to the Karen National Union ("KNU"), the military attacked civilian targets on June 9, including a school in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State, using cluster bombs.³ According to a local resident, the village that was bombed is far from the active conflict areas, which indicates that this may have been a direct attack on civilians.⁴ Twenty-two villagers, including 18 schoolchildren, were injured in the attack, and 10 civilian houses and a monastery building were damaged.⁵

Ahead of the planned election in December, the junta has sent around 2,000 troops to the border of Shan and Kayah States to boost security for the Kayah capital, Loikaw. Junta forces and the allied Pa-O National Organization troops have been pushing into villages east of Pekon lake, reportedly displacing many villagers from their homes.

The junta reportedly attacked northern Sagaing Township, adjacent to resistance held Wetlet Township, clashed with resistance groups and displaced thousands of residents. On the morning of June 20, fighting broke out near Kyaw Zeya village, blocking the Mandalay-Shwebo road at Sar Taung town and Yonepin Kan village.

In retaliation for a June 16 resistance attack on a regime position on the Yangon-Pyay Road, the junta reportedly raided and torched around eight villages in Minhla Township in western Bago Region and bombed the area, forcing thousands of residents from nearly 40 villages in eastern Minhla Township from their homes.¹⁰

II. <u>Political Developments</u>

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

On June 3, the United Nations Children's Fund ("UNICEF") suspended thousands of learning centers run by nongovernmental organizations in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh due to lack of funding.¹¹ "The U.S. and other donor governments are abandoning education for Rohingya children after the previous Bangladesh government long blocked it," said Bill Van Esveld, associate children's rights director at Human Rights Watch.¹² "The interim Bangladesh government should uphold everyone's right to education, while donors should support the Rohingya community's efforts to prevent a lost generation of students."¹³

Global aid cuts have forced UNICEF to dismiss more than 1,000 teachers in the refugee camps, with more jobs at risk without additional funding. "Due to the global aid funding crisis, UNICEF has had to make difficult decisions impacting early education services for Rohingya refugee children," the agency said in a statement on June 3. UNICEF said that the contracts of 1,179 people working on kindergarten and primary schools were terminated. Before the cuts, there were an estimated 4,000 teachers in the camps, according to Bangladeshi senior government aid official, Md Shamsud Douza.

The United Nations World Food Programme ("WFP") welcomed a recent contribution from China, provided through the China International Development Cooperation Agency. The contribution will enable WFP to procure 2,100 metric tons of fortified rice, pulses and cooking oil, which is enough to provide a three-month food ration to around 45,000 Rohingya refugees living in Cox's Bazar. This generous funding from China could not have come at a more critical time, said Dom Scalpelli, WFP Country Director. With humanitarian needs rising and resources under immense pressure, this contribution allows us to continue delivering lifesaving food assistance to some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Stakeholders from government, civil society, the media and humanitarian organizations gathered in Cox's Bazar on June 19 to discuss the future and growing challenges of hosting over one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, as part of World Refugee Day 2025 observances. Md. Shamsud Douza said the Rohingya refugee crisis has entered a difficult phase due to falling international support. Referring to the ongoing unrest in Myanmar's Rakhine State, he also added that conditions for safe and voluntary repatriation remain unfavorable. As a specific property of the media and humanitarian organizations gathered in Cox's Bazar on June 19 to discuss the future and growing challenges of hosting over one million Rohingya refugee Day 2025

Bangladesh and Malaysia made urgent appeals at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation ("OIC") ministerial meetings in Istanbul for intensified legal and humanitarian action on the Rohingya crisis, warning of a dramatic collapse in aid and mounting displacement driven by conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Bangladesh's Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain called upon OIC member states to fund ongoing legal proceedings against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice and to address a deepening aid shortfall that has crippled support for more than 1.3 million Rohingya refugees sheltering in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. Char.

B. Corruption

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

C. International Community / Sanctions

During meetings with the Kachin Independence Army ("KIA") and Arakan Army ("AA") in late May, Chinese special envoy to Myanmar, Deng Xijun, reportedly urged the rebel groups to "halt military offensives in Kachin State's Bhamo and Rakhine State's Kyaukphyu" and offered improved ties with China in return for their cooperation. ²⁷ According to an unnamed military analyst, China "aims to force all the groups to halt fighting and engage in talks with the Myanmar military."

On June 2, the United Kingdom's representative to the World Trade Organization and United Nations, Simon Manley, spoke on behalf of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand at the 113th International Labour Conference. ²⁹ During his remarks, he expressed the coalition's "deepest sympathies for the people of Myanmar" following yet another earthquake in the country. ³⁰ He further remarked about the "Myanmar military regime's ongoing intransigence in observing Convention 87 on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, and Convention 29 on Forced Labour," noted concerns

about "reports of continued systematic exploitation of civilians for different types of forced labour" and called for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism to ensure Myanmar's compliance with the International Labor Organization's ("ILO") recommendations. The ILO voted on June 5 to "take action against Myanmar's regime for severe labor, human rights violations and forced conscription." Russia, Belarus, Laos and China each opposed the action. The new resolution, targeting only the military regime and not the state of Myanmar or its people, calls upon all ILO constituents "to review and take appropriate steps to ensure their relationships do not, in any way, enable or support the junta's continued violations . . . [including] the supply of goods and services, investment flows, or any form of cooperation that could contribute to the perpetuation of repression or forced labor."³⁴

On June 4, United States President Donald Trump signed a new travel ban barring all travel to the United States by nationals of Myanmar and 11 other nations with a partial ban on travelers from seven more countries. ³⁵ The ban went into effect on June 9. ³⁶

The United Nations' ("UN") Special Envoy to Myanmar, Julie Bishop, briefed the UN General Assembly on June 10 and stressed that "without a ceasefire, a de-escalation of violence and a focus on the needs of the people, there can be no inclusive lasting peace" in Myanmar. ³⁷ In her remarks, she noted that there had "been no end to the violence" and that the announced ceasefires had "largely not been observed" in the conflict. ³⁸ In response to Bishop's briefing, China's deputy permanent representative and ambassador to the United Nations, Sun Lei, told the assembly that "China had formally dissociated itself from the consensus adoption of the resolution" and further remarked that they "oppose the politicization and instrumentalization of human rights issues, and reject the practice of exerting public pressure on such matters." ³⁹ He further stated that China supported Myanmar in "pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions, and in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and national stability while steadily advancing its domestic political agenda."

On June 25, UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said that the junta's calls for democratic elections in Myanmar were an effort "to create this mirage of an election exercise that will create a legitimate civilian government" in an effort to "find an exit ramp to the international pressure" facing the junta government. ⁴¹ He further remarked that he believed it to be "really important that countries reject this idea of an election and not allow the military junta to attempt to get away with this fraud."⁴²

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing addressed the 4th Eurasian Economic Forum in Belarus on June 26 and "emphasized his regime's desire to deepen ties with the [Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union ("EAEU")] as a way of countering international sanctions." ⁴³ During his address, he expressed his "sincere request to support Myanmar's intention to join the EAEU as an observer state" and to "expand the potential of cooperation with the EAEU member states in economy and trade." During the forum, on June 27, Belarusian President Aleksander Lukashenko held a meeting with Min Aung Hlaing to develop a "specific roadmap . . . aimed at strengthening relations not only in political and humanitarian areas, but also in trade and economy" and noted that the two nations had "already stated implementing some aspects of [their] agreements."

On June 27, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, briefed the Human Rights Council on "four key pathways to lay the groundwork for a transition toward a peaceful and democratic Myanmar: justice and accountability, democratic governance, economic reform to serve the people, and sustained international engagement." He further noted that "it [was] imperative for the military to immediately end the violence, allow unhindered humanitarian access and release all arbitrarily detained people" for the "people of Myanmar and their aspirations for a better future."

On June 28, the human rights group Justice for Myanmar stated that "it had uncovered significant, ongoing military collaboration" between Belarus and Myanmar, to include Belarus supplying the junta with "an air defense system . . . to defend against anti-regime drone strikes."⁴⁷ The group further called for "sanctions against Myanmar's arms brokers trading with Belarus" and noted that "[r]epresentatives from the Belarusian arms industry and universities with military engineering and training programmes ha[d] repeatedly visited Myanmar this year and signed deals with Myanmar's universities on military applicability."⁴⁸

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

The junta regime arrested 16 people in connection with the murder of retired Brigadier-General Cho Tun Aung, who was killed outside of his home on May 22.⁴⁹ A six-year old girl, the daughter of the alleged gunman, was among those arrested.⁵⁰ In response, the organization that claims responsibility for the political murder, the Golden Valley Warriors, said that the arrestees were not part of the murder conspiracy and claimed that the regime "arrested the six-year-old girl to instill fear in pro-democracy groups."⁵¹

The junta regime is reportedly conducting arrests of people who criticize junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, even within pro-military circles. Prominent regime supporter Zaw Phone Hein was arrested for his comment that he would set himself on fire if the Northeastern Command in the northern Shan State capital, Lashio, fell to the junta regime. He was arrested in his home and sent to Mandalay for interrogation. Further, a pro-military news channel called for the arrest of any person who criticized Zaw Phone Hein's arrest. Two military supporters, Ngar Min Swe and Kyaw Zeya, were also arrested for allegedly criticizing the government. Further, a junta-allied militia leader, Zaw Yu Tun, was arrested under the Telecommunications Law following a disagreement with a military officer at a checkpoint. Zaw Yu Tun posted on the internet about "families...paying heavy bribes to avoid conscription and men were not going out at night because they feared junta abductions."

Trusted junta officials are reportedly now replacing teachers to run polling stations in the upcoming elections.⁵⁹ The Union Election Commission Law has been amended to allow "government staff to chair all Myanmar's election bodies."⁶⁰

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

A recent report from the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law ("ICNL") recounts the Myanmar junta's suppression of journalists and media outlets since the February 2021

coup. According to the report, 221 journalists were detained between February 2021 and February 2025. The detainees, 88 were convicted, and prison sentences total 497 years. In addition, the report states that 99 media outlets have been affected by the detentions. The junta has prosecuted journalists and media workers under nine laws; it primarily prosecutes them under laws prohibiting "false news" and "incitement." ICNL urges the international community to take action to protect Myanmar's journalists and media workers.

Between May 20 and June 20, the military junta reportedly arrested 32 young people for posting anti-junta content on platforms such as TikTok and Facebook.⁶⁷ The arrests occurred all over the country, including in Mandalay, Yangon and Naypyidaw.⁶⁸ The junta is allegedly employing digital surveillance systems to monitor social media, then using the information to arrest its opponents.⁶⁹ The junta has labeled pro-democracy groups such as National Unity Government ("NUG") and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as terrorists, and has said it will prosecute anyone who promotes the groups on social media sites.⁷⁰

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

Myanmar's regime has appointed economist Dr Zaw Oo as a Central Bank of Myanmar director.⁷¹

Russia signed an investment agreement with Myanmar on June 20 that it said could open up new opportunities for Russian energy companies in the south Asian country.⁷² Russia said the deal would help accelerate projects including in Myanmar's Dawei special economic zone, where a 660 MW coal-fired thermal power plant is being developed.⁷³

Admiral Tin Aung San, chair of the Electricity and Energy Development Commission, met with Chinese energy firms, including Union Resource and Engineering and SPIC Yunnan International Power Investment ("SPICYN"), during his trip to attend the China-South Asia Exposition. SPICYN is the developer of the controversial Myitsone Dam hydropower project in Kachin State, which was shelved in 2011 over environmental concerns.

During a recent trip to Russia, junta Minister for Transport and Communications, General Mya Tun Oo, outlined how Myanmar's transport infrastructure, particularly its ports and railways, could serve as key hubs for transshipment of Russian goods to regional markets. At the 28th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Mya Tun Oo sought to strengthen economic ties, promote investment and explore infrastructure cooperation with Russia and other international stakeholders, promoting Myanmar as a transport corridor for Russian goods. 77

On June 12, the World Bank released a report, noting its expectation that "Myanmar's beleaguered economy is expected to contract by 2.5 percent in the 2025/26 fiscal year" as a result of the March earthquake.⁷⁸ The report further estimated the amount of total damages in the country to be "nearly \$11 billion, with full reconstruction expected to cost two to three times more."⁷⁹

On June 17, the Asian Development Bank ("ADB") approved a US\$100-million aid package for "humanitarian assistance and long-term community resilience in Myanmar" to be delivered through the United Nations Development Program, UN Children's Fund and World Food Program. ⁸⁰ In a statement from the ADB President, Masato Kanda, the organization said that the grant, which is the ADB's largest single grant to Myanmar, would "deliver food, water, shelter and medical care to families in desperate need, while also supporting long-term livelihood, jobs, and community resilience."

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

China is reportedly progressing with its Belt and Road Initiative ("BRI") infrastructure projects in Myanmar, despite the ongoing conflict. BRI, which involves around 70 countries, including Myanmar, aims to enhance trade and investment by developing road, rail and maritime routes from China through Asia to Africa and Europe. The key projects related to Myanmar include the Kyaukphyu deep-sea port in Rakhine State and a planned railway linking Rakhine to Yunnan Province, following the route of existing oil and gas pipelines. The railway, once finished, would connect the border town of Muse in northern Shan State with Mandalay and Kyaukphyu, linking landlocked western China to the Indian Ocean. However, the current military government has lost control of much of northern Shan State, Mandalay Region and Rakhine State amid continuing military conflicts in the country. China has reportedly applied pressure on the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army ("MNDAA") and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army ("TNLA") in northern Shan State, pushing them to hold peace talks with the regime and hand back seized territory.

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

On June 3, the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the KNU, recaptured the Thay Baw Boe base near the Thai-Myanmar border in Myawaddy Township. 88 Over 500 Myanmar nationals near the clash site reportedly crossed the Myanmar-Thai border seeking refuge from the fighting. 89

On June 9, as part of a counteroffensive reportedly aimed at reclaiming control of Myanmar's jade hub, the junta bombed a mining compound storing explosives near Seik Mu village, one hour south of Hpakant town, triggering blasts and fires. As of June 17, fighting reportedly continued in Hmaw Si Zar village, Hpakant Township, where junta troops had been conducting offensive operations against KIA-controlled areas. In villages such as Hmaw Si Zar and Taung Yar Kone, where military forces are active, at least 13 bodies had reportedly been found since June 12.92

As the AA advanced to within 5 kilometers of Kyaukphyu, one of only three towns in Rakhine State still under the junta control, the junta reportedly deployed jet fighters, Y-12 aircraft and drones in aerial assaults on AA units near the police battalion on June 9.93

According to a KIA spokesman, the junta is planning to reclaim Special Region 1 – a rare earth hub previously controlled by the junta-aligned New Democratic Army Kachin. Junta infantry, supported by drones, have reportedly reached Lamyan village on the road leading east to KIA-controlled Sadone town in Waingmaw and the junta is allegedly arming militias in Khaunglanphu town, Putao Township, on Kachin State's northern border with China. State's

The junta military has launched a major offensive to retake Nawnghkio and surrounding towns, which were taken by the TNLA in July 2024. On the evening of June 24, a junta fighter jet allegedly dropped two 500lb bombs on TNLA-controlled Kyaukme town, next to Nawnghkio, killing four people and injuring 14 others. On the night of June 25, the junta reportedly bombed Mogoke, a ruby town held by the TNLA in northern Mandalay Region, destroying five houses and a monastery canteen and injuring two civilians. On the same date, the junta also reportedly bombed Mawchi town, which is held by the Karenni Nationalities Defense Force, in Hpasawng Township, Karenni (Kayah) State, killing at least seven miners and injuring at least 20 others.

The Karenni Army renewed a resistance offensive in Kayah State on June 5, reportedly resulting in the deaths of approximately 20 junta soldiers and five resistance fighters. ¹⁰⁰

B. Peace Talks

From June 25–27, the junta held a "Peace Forum" in Naypyitaw.¹⁰¹ According to junta media, "representatives from ethnic armed organizations that have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement" were in attendance, "as well as some non-NCA signatories including the United Wa State Army, the MNDAA, the Shan State Progress Party, political parties that have registered for the junta's election and civil society organizations,"¹⁰² while PDF groups loyal to the NUG and ethnic rebels were absent.¹⁰³ Min Aung Hlaing addressed the forum emphasizing the need for strong ties with other countries, but stressing that Myanmar's progress towards peace "must be free from foreign interference and domestic disruptions."¹⁰⁴

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