

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

NOVEMBER 2025 REPORT

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

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I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

On November 12, resistance groups reportedly killed at least 50 Myanmar military troops and allied Pyu Saw Htee militia members during an ambush of a 100-member military column near the border of Kantbalu and Khin-U townships in Sagaing Region.¹ The resistance groups also reportedly seized weapons, including 27 assault rifles.²

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

At least 27 people reportedly died after a boat carrying undocumented migrants sank in November near the Malaysian island of Langkawi, near the border with Thailand.³ The Malaysian Coast Guard estimates about 70 people were on board.⁴ According to Malaysian authorities, the passengers are believed to be mostly Rohingya who left Myanmar's impoverished Rakhine State.⁵ "People are dying in the fighting, dying from hunger. So some think it's better to die at sea than to die slowly here," a Rohingya refugee in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, had previously told *Reuters*.⁶ Officials say many of the refugees would have each paid more than US\$3,000 for to be transported by sea.⁷ Malaysian authorities also noted that about 300 people boarded a vessel bound for Malaysia two weeks ago, and were transferred onto two boats on November 6.⁸ The smaller boat sank, while the fate of around 230 people on board the other vessel remained unclear, officials said.⁹

Education Cannot Wait ("ECW") and its strategic donor partners announced a US\$3.5 million grant to address the evolving Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh through education.¹⁰ The First Emergency Response is aimed at restoring access to education for 180,000 children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, home to the largest refugee camp in the world.¹¹ The new funding builds on ECW's US\$50.7 million in total investment in Bangladesh, which has reportedly reached over 386,000 children, 96% of whom are Rohingya refugees.¹² The investments have reportedly built or rehabilitated 2,300 classrooms, provided financial support to 2,700 educators and delivered training on disaster-risk reduction, gender, mental health and psychosocial support and other key topics to teachers and administrators.¹³

The Republic of Korea has provided the International Organization for Migration with US\$5 million to improve the living conditions for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar.¹⁴ The contribution from the Republic of Korea will reportedly provide assistance to more than 420,000 Rohingya refugees who continue to live in highly congested camps.¹⁵

B. Corruption

Narinjara News reported on November 29 that Major General Myo Min Htwe, Northwestern Region Command Commander, was arrested and interrogated on charges of corruption and operational failures and Deputy Minister of Electricity and Energy Thant Sin was dismissed and detained on November 25, amid allegations of fuel price speculation, bribery in oil quota distribution and undocumented fuel smuggling.¹⁶

C. International Community / Sanctions

The United States imposed financial sanctions on a Myanmar militia group on November 12 for supporting a cyber scam operation that targeted Americans from territory it controls.¹⁷ The new sanctions target the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and four of its leaders, as well as entities and an individual linked to Chinese organized crime.¹⁸

The United Kingdom delivered a statement at the United Nations Third Committee meeting on Myanmar on November 19 expressing concern about the ongoing violence in Myanmar “including escalating human rights violations and increasing reports of sexual and gender-based violence.”¹⁹ In the statement, the UK urged all parties to cease hostilities, respect international law, ensure the protection of civilians and allow aid to those who need it.²⁰

U.S. lawmakers from two subcommittees of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs issued a joint statement on November 20 stressing that the U.S. “must continue to stand with the people of Burma as they pursue freedom, dignity, and a democratic future.”²¹ The statement was released following a November 19 congressional hearing on the ongoing crisis in Myanmar wherein international experts “urged Congress to reject the junta’s planned election and to take stronger action to protect Americans from Myanmar-based scam operations.”²²

On November 24, the United States announced that it is ending temporary protections shielding immigrants from Myanmar from deportation from the U.S.²³ The decision is expected to affect around 4,000 people from Myanmar that are living and working in the United States under Temporary Protected Status.²⁴

On November 25, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow said that he did not believe the upcoming election in Myanmar would be “free and credible” and that Thailand “won’t be in a position to recognize the elections.”²⁵ Phuangketkeow further noted that even the imperfect election, whose results could not be recognized, could “be a good opportunity to return the country back to stability and democracy.”²⁶ On November 28, the United Nations Human Rights Office raised similar concerns about the upcoming election, calling it a military-controlled ballot conducted in an environment “rife with threats and violence” and actively suppressed political participation.²⁷

On November 30, Thai military forces, which are currently deployed to secure the border between Thailand and Myanmar, ordered crossing points along the border to close for seven days to prevent movement by civilians or armed groups due to the escalating hostilities along the shared border between Myanmar military troops and Karen National Union (“KNU”) troops.²⁸ The Thai government further warned that any cross-border fire “will be met with immediate retaliatory action to protect Thai sovereignty” following an incident where five mortar rounds landed inside Thai territory.²⁹

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

On November 10, Myanmar state media reported that 25 citizens were arrested for violating the Election Protection Law.³⁰ Approximately 22 of the 25 arrested citizens are reportedly KNU members from Thaton District (also known as Doothahtoo District) in Mon State.³¹ The Myanmar regime has also allegedly detained an unspecified number of members of the People's Defense Force in Sinphyukyun of Magway Region.³² In addition, the Myanmar regime reportedly arrested three film directors and two actors for social media posts criticizing a junta election campaign video on October 31.³³ The Election Protection Law prohibits individuals from opposing or disrupting the upcoming election. Violations carry a minimum sentence of three years in prison and a maximum sentence of death.³⁴ Total arrests under the Election Protection Law since its introduction on July 29 have risen to 125 as of November 17.³⁵

The State Administration Council ("SAC") granted amnesty or dropped the sentences of 3,085 individuals convicted under a law criminalizing comments that "cause fear" or spread "false news" ahead of the upcoming election, purportedly to encourage voter participation.³⁶ According to the Myanmar National Defense and Security Council, nearly 5,600 pending cases have also been closed.³⁷ The SAC said the sentences were dropped "to ensure that all eligible voters do not lose their right to vote in the upcoming multi-party democratic general election."³⁸

A key aide to Myanmar's former National League for Democracy ("NLD") leader Aung San Suu Kyi was among the hundreds of political prisoners freed by the SAC on November 27 in a pre-election amnesty.³⁹ Kyi Toe is the former NLD Information Committee chief and had been jailed since 2021.⁴⁰ The NLD, which won 2020 polls, has been dissolved by the SAC and is not eligible to participate in the elections, which are expected to last around a month.⁴¹ Several rights monitors and a UN expert have dismissed the vote as a fig leaf to conceal continuing military rule.⁴²

Myanmar's military regime is reportedly pressuring displaced people ("IDPs") in Mandalay and Sagaing unless they cast advance votes for the December-January election.⁴³ The regime's Union Election Commission has reportedly ordered voters displaced from their constituencies to cast advance ballots between November 25 and 29.⁴⁴ Local administrators, and pro-SAC militias have been allegedly mobilized to enforce compliance, according to residents.⁴⁵ On September 27, displaced adults in Sagaing were each given 60,000 kyats (about US\$28), framed as three months of refugee support, but only after signing documents pledging to vote.⁴⁶ Displaced families are also required to report either weekly or twice a month to local ward authorities under Ward or Village Tract Administration Law.⁴⁷ The colonial-era law, reactivated by the regime after the 2021 coup, also requires citizens to inform local government officials of any overnight guests.⁴⁸ It allows authorities to enter buildings without a warrant and arrest both hosts and guests for non-compliance.⁴⁹ A former political prisoner from Sagaing said the regime is abusing this provision to force IDPs into casting advance votes.⁵⁰ "Junta authorities are threatening to withdraw approval of their stay if they don't vote," they said.⁵¹ Authorities claim the move aims to ensure "eligible voters do not lose their right to vote."⁵² In practice, however, displaced families say they are being forced to sign pledges and cast advance ballots under threat

of losing aid, and most significantly, shelter.⁵³ More than 1.4 million IDPs are sheltering across the two regions, according to the UN refugee agency.⁵⁴

Yangon factory workers say they are being mobilized to support the military's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party ("USDP") in the upcoming election.⁵⁵ SAC-appointed local administrators have reportedly visited workplaces to explain voting procedures and collect worker lists, while factory owners have allegedly urged workers to cast their ballots for the USDP.⁵⁶ A worker from Shwepyithar Industrial Zone told *The Irrawaddy* that employers themselves are organizing the effort.⁵⁷ Employees said they have already been registered by ward administration offices, but factories are requiring them to fill out additional voter application forms.⁵⁸ Another worker said employers are being "pressured" to accept election preparations inside their factories.⁵⁹ "We have to submit registration forms, purportedly to vote," he said.⁶⁰

Myanmar's Union Election Commission rejected an appeal by Thet Thet Khine, People's Pioneer Party chair and a former government minister, upholding her disqualification from the upcoming election.⁶¹ She was disqualified on October 21 under Section 8(d) of the Election Law, which bars candidates with unresolved liabilities to the state or public.⁶² She reportedly owes nearly 100 billion kyats (about \$47.6 million) to Kanbawza Bank over a failed Yangon housing project.⁶³ Observers note that Section 8(d) was added to the law in July only after the regime announced its election schedule earlier this year.⁶⁴ Thet Thet Khine is among a total of 86 candidates disqualified nationwide.⁶⁵

The KNU imposed a curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. and travel ban to stop a stream of individuals relocating from scam centers on the border with Thailand.⁶⁶ The KNU also banned locals from sheltering any foreign nationals that might try to travel through the area from the scam center hub of Myawaddy.⁶⁷

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

The SAC filed charges against The Assistance Association for Myanmar-based Independent Journalists ("AAMIJ") on November 10 alleging that it also violated the Election Protection Law.⁶⁸ According to AAMIJ's editor, Htet Arkar, earlier in November the outlet reported on a SAC-affiliated candidate's involvement in illegal drug trafficking.⁶⁹ The SAC previously arrested AAMIJ reporter Myat Thu Kyaw, who remains imprisoned at Yangon's Insein Prison.⁷⁰ A court sentenced him to three years for criminal incitement in 2023, and five more years under the Counterterrorism Law in 2025.⁷¹ The Committee to Protect Journalists and International Federation of Journalists urged the SAC to drop the charges against AAMIJ and release Myat Thu Kyaw.⁷²

On November 13, Freedom House published its 2025 "Freedom on the Net" report.⁷³ According to the report, Myanmar continues to be one of the worst places in the world for internet freedom.⁷⁴ Freedom House gave Myanmar a score of 9 out of 100, tying China for the lowest score.⁷⁵ The report cited the SAC's adoption of advanced surveillance tools and increasingly restrictive internet regulations.⁷⁶ Specifically, the 2025 Cybersecurity Law restricts VPN use, imposes strict data retention requirements on service providers, and codifies broad censorship mandates.⁷⁷ Widespread internet shutdowns have been ongoing since 2021, and the

March 2025 earthquake in Mandalay further compromised telecom infrastructure.⁷⁸ Freedom House also noted that the regime continues to imprison journalists and target digital dissent.⁷⁹

On November 15, Reporters Without Borders (“RSF”) honored filmmaker Shin Daewe with an Independence Award.⁸⁰ Shin Daewe is currently serving a 15-year sentence at Yangon’s Insein Prison for violating the Counterterrorism Law.⁸¹ RSF noted her work on environmental issues and the impact of the ongoing civil conflict.⁸² Shin Daewe has previously worked as a video journalist for media outlets including *Democratic Voice of Burma* and *Radio Free Asia*.⁸³ On January 11, 2024, she was sentenced to life in prison after being detained in October 2023 for traveling with a drone in her luggage.⁸⁴ The sentence was later reduced to 15 years, but remains one of the harshest sentences the SAC has imposed on a journalist.⁸⁵

Freelance photojournalist Zaw Lin Htut (a/k/a Phoe Thar) was released from Insein Prison on November 28 as part of a mass amnesty.⁸⁶ The SAC surrogates arrested the photographer on September 19, 2024, while he was participating in nonviolent protest activities.⁸⁷ On January 31, 2025, a court sentenced him to three years in prison under Section 505(a), which criminalizes incitement and spreading “fake news.”⁸⁸ Zaw Lin Htut had previously served time for participating in anti-SAC protests.⁸⁹ He was a regular contributor to *Democratic Voice of Burma* and a member of the Peacock Group that performed “thangyat,” a traditional art form that resembles slam poetry.⁹⁰

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

On October 29, the Yangon Region Investment Committee endorsed four foreign manufacturing enterprises with an estimated capital of US\$5.2 million to produce clothing and garments on a cutting, making and packaging basis, which are expected to create over 3,695 local jobs.⁹¹

Myanmar’s shadow National Unity Government (“NUG”) listed its Spring Development Bank (“SDB”) cryptocurrency tokens on the cryptocurrency exchange MEXC on November 14, with the token’s value increasing nearly fivefold in six days, reaching a market cap of US\$724.7 million.⁹² The NUG established the SDB in July 2023 as Myanmar’s first crypto-based financial institution to fund the resistance and establish an alternative financial system outside the SAC’s control.⁹³ The chief executive officer of SDB attributed the rise to market demand and revolutionary momentum, noting the bank has already provided nearly US\$30 million in support to the resistance.⁹⁴ The NUG is also reportedly expanding its partnership with major exchanges like Binance and Bybit.⁹⁵ The SAC has condemned the SDB, banning digital currency use in Myanmar and accusing the bank of being a scam, while also reportedly testing its own central bank digital currency.⁹⁶ The NUG also launched its own digital currency, the Digital Myanmar Kyat, and the NUGPay app in 2022 and plans to develop a broader fintech ecosystem, including e-commerce, to further its financial independence.⁹⁷

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

The SAC formed a national-level Project Steering Committee for the construction of the Muse-Mandalay railway, a key segment of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.⁹⁸ The Muse-Mandalay railway would link the border town of Muse with Mandalay via Lashio, Hsipaw, Kyaukme, Nawnghkio and Pyin Oo Lwin, and eventually connect to Kyaukphyu in Rakhine State, giving China direct access to the Indian Ocean.⁹⁹ The railway corridor remains contested. Despite China-brokered ceasefire agreements in Shan State, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army still controls the Lashio-Hseni stretch, while Ta'ang National Liberation Army ("TNLA") and Kachin Independence Army troops hold routes around Kutkai and Muse.¹⁰⁰

The SAC also formed a committee to generally expedite the implementation of China's Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure projects in Myanmar.¹⁰¹ The Leading Committee for Implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative includes Union ministers, deputy ministers, heads of Union-level agencies and chief ministers of states and regions.¹⁰² It is tasked with coordinating and implementing Belt and Road Initiative-related projects across national and regional levels, particularly those forming part of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zones.¹⁰³

Heavy mining by the TNLA and affiliated Chinese mining companies in Mogoke, a ruby town in Mandalay Region, is reportedly devastating the local environment, as the TNLA prepares to hand the town back to the SAC under a China-brokered truce.¹⁰⁴ Residents point to a sharp acceleration in mining on the town's golf course and neighboring areas as evidence.¹⁰⁵

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

In November, fierce fighting erupted in northern Kawkaik Township, Kayin State as Myanmar military troops push to seize key border trade routes with Thailand.¹⁰⁶ The most intense battles reportedly took place near Htee Pho San village, just north of Kawkaik.¹⁰⁷

On November 14, the Karen National Liberation Army ("KNLA") and allies recaptured the town of Mawdaung in Tanintharyi Region, which borders Myanmar and Thailand.¹⁰⁸ The town had been controlled by the Myanmar military for 35 years.¹⁰⁹ Approximately 1,000 residents were reportedly displaced to nearby villages as a result of the attack.¹¹⁰

In November, military clashes reportedly escalated across Kyaukphyu Township in Rakhine State after the SAC declared elections in the township, with heavy air and artillery strikes driving tens of thousands of residents from their homes.¹¹¹ According to reports from residents, the Myanmar military has deployed more than 1,000 reinforcements and tanks in Kyaukphyu.¹¹² On November 17, Myanmar military aircraft reportedly bombed Taungngu village, 32 kilometers from Kyaukphyu, allegedly killing three women and injuring at least five others, including two children.¹¹³ The same day, bombs struck Kyaukkalay and Leiktin villages,

reportedly destroying a school in Leiktin.¹¹⁴ Thirty Myanmar military soldiers advancing into Kyaukphyu Township were reportedly killed on November 17 during an ambush by the Arakan Army (“AA”).¹¹⁵ According to an AA source, the soldiers thought the area had been abandoned and were not expecting the ambush.¹¹⁶

B. Peace Talks

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

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