

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

DECEMBER 2025 REPORT

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

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I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

On December 2, a military airstrike reportedly killed all five members of a family, including a two-year-old girl, after the strike hit a shophouse home in Nat Hmaw U village in Sagaing Region's Wetlet Township.¹ The attack also reportedly damaged five houses and injured two additional 10-year-old children and three adults.²

The Myanmar air force reportedly attacked Mrauk-U General Hospital in Rakhine State on December 10 with two 500-pound bombs, killing 33 patients, caregivers and medical personnel and injuring 76.³ Mrauk-U was captured by the Arakan Army ("AA") in February 2024.⁴ On December 11, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk demanded an investigation into the attack, noting that it could constitute a war crime.⁵ However, the Myanmar air force reportedly bombed Kyaukphyu Township the following day, killing eight people and wounding 16 others.⁶ The military also reportedly bombed villages in Ponnagyun and Rathedaung Townships and AA-controlled Gwa town on December 13.⁷

On December 16, four fighter jets from Tada-U Air Base and three gyrocopters from the Northeastern Military Command in Monywa reportedly conducted a total of 18 attacks across eastern areas of the township.⁸ One airstrike allegedly targeted traffic near a village, killing four passengers, including a Buddhist monk, and damaging multiple vehicles.⁹

Five Myanmar fighter jets allegedly bombed two jetties on the Irrawaddy River in Sagaing Region's Khin U Township on December 17.¹⁰ The barrage reportedly killed seven people who had fled across the river from neighboring Singu Township and injured 15 others.¹¹

On the same day, a fighter jet from Meiktila airbase reportedly bombed Se Taw village in neighboring Wetlet Township even though there were no reported clashes on the ground.¹² The airstrike allegedly killed four villagers, while injuring others and destroying houses and vehicles.¹³

The Myanmar military reportedly deployed four fighter jets and three gyrocopters on December 18 to allegedly bomb civilian targets across Sagaing's Khin-U Township.¹⁴ The targets included a roadside fuel depot and nearby junction, where 13 civilians were reportedly killed.¹⁵ A Khin-U Township People's Administration official said that regime aircraft had deliberately targeted civilians with bombs, rockets and machinegun fire despite an absence of clashes with resistance groups in the area.¹⁶

In the runup to the national election on December 28, the Myanmar military reportedly conducted some 40 aerial bombardments as well as artillery strikes, arson attacks and raids on villages in Sagaing, Magway and Mandalay Regions.¹⁷ On December 24, gyrocopters reportedly bombarded Budalin Township in Sagaing, killing a woman in a betel nut shop.¹⁸ Between December 21 and 23, military forces reportedly raided villages in Myingyan and Natogyi Townships in Mandalay.¹⁹ On December 27, a Myanmar military aircraft reportedly bombed an area near Myaynisho Village in Khin-U Township, Sagaing Region, killing nine people and injuring ten others.²⁰

Resistance group Brave Warriors for Myanmar (“BWM”) claimed responsibility for detonating homemade rockets in Mandalay the night before the first phase of the general election, reportedly injuring two civilians.²¹ BWM said that it was targeting the Myanmar military’s Central Regional Military Command.²² Locals said the government immediately tightened security in Mandalay, especially in Aungmyaythazan and Chanayethazan townships, where the first phase of the election was planned.²³ In Kayin State, Myawaddy town was also reportedly attacked by resistance bombs on the eve of the election.²⁴ A local said that the attack occurred near the office of the military’s proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (“USDP”), killing at least one person and injuring ten others.²⁵

As widely expected, the Myanmar military’s proxy USDP secured a dominant victory in the first phase of the junta-organized election held on December 28.²⁶ USDP spokesman Hla Thein told *The Irrawaddy* that preliminary results show the party winning “at least 80 percent” of the contested seats.²⁷ As of December 30, the Union Election Commission has yet to release official results.²⁸ The election has been denounced as a sham designed to legitimize military rule by Western governments, the civilian National Unity Government (“NUG”), resistance forces and international rights experts.²⁹

Units under the civilian NUG are facing two separate cases of alleged unlawful detention, killing and disposal of bodies.³⁰ The Naypyitaw-based People’s Defense Force (“PDF”) Battalion 802 under the NUG’s Ministry of Defense was implicated in the death of private Hlwan Moe, who had been accused of rape.³¹ According to former battalion member Shine Htet, the Hlwan Moe died in April during interrogation ordered by deputy battalion commander Naing Lin Aung.³² The body was then allegedly buried near the battalion camp.³³ Shine Htet admitted to participating in both the beating and the burial, saying, “We accidentally killed him during interrogation. Hlwan Moe asked for water, but the deputy commander gave him saltwater instead. I took part in the beating initially, but I hadn’t expected the deputy commander to go that far.”³⁴ Shine Htet said he had waited eight months to report it due to security concerns.³⁵ The body has been exhumed for forensic investigation.³⁶

In a separate case, Bahin Village People’s Administration (“Pa Ah Pha”) leader Ko Hla Aung and two members were allegedly detained by seven PDF fighters around midnight on November 23 in Myaing Township, Magway Region.³⁷ Family members said they learned five days later that Ko Hla Aung had died in custody.³⁸ His body has not been returned, and the other two detainees remain missing.³⁹ Villagers said the detention followed an incident earlier that evening, when the village Pa Ah Pha group detained a motorcyclist for repeatedly riding noisily through the village.⁴⁰ The group reportedly administered four lashes and released him.⁴¹ Relatives later discovered the rider was a former member of a township-level administration group.⁴² That night, PDF fighters allegedly stormed the Pa Ah Pha office, forced everyone to kneel at gunpoint, and detained the local leader and two members, said relatives.⁴³

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

At the annual United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (“UNHCR”) Pledging Conference held on December 2, donors pledged \$1.161 billion to UNHCR to provide life-

saving protection, assistance and solutions in 2026 to millions forced to flee their homes.⁴⁴ The total pledge is slightly above the amount pledged last year for UNHCR's operations in 2025, which was then an all-time high.⁴⁵ "This year's drastic funding cuts – neither necessary nor inevitable – have been deeply counterproductive, leading to more instability and less protection, assistance and hope," said Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees.⁴⁶ "Today's commitments show that the world has not turned its back on people forced to flee, and that support for refugees endures. Early and flexible funding gives us the lifeline we need to move quickly when new emergencies erupt and to keep delivering solutions in neglected crises."⁴⁷

In particular, the European Union ("EU") has allocated an additional €15 million in humanitarian aid to address the needs of communities impacted by the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, and €14 million in development aid for Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh and other neighboring countries.⁴⁸ The People's Republic of China has contributed \$2.5 million to provide liquified petroleum gas ("LPG") to meet the cooking needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.⁴⁹ Additionally, the United Kingdom and Qatar announced \$11.2 million in joint funding to support more than 647,000 Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar.⁵⁰ According to a statement from the British High Commission in Dhaka, the initiative will provide LPG to vulnerable refugee families, aiming to improve daily living conditions and curb environmental damage caused by the reliance on firewood in and around the camps.⁵¹

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society also highlighted the deepening humanitarian crisis facing Rohingya refugees and host communities at the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review held in Geneva on December 15-17.⁵²

B. Corruption

On December 2, *The Irrawaddy* reported that the SAC is set to bring charges against former Deputy Energy Minister Thant Sin and ex-Petroleum Regulatory Department Director General Shwe Maw, who were fired and detained in mid-November over a corruption scandal linked to fuel import-related dollar speculation and bribery, with multiple ministry officials and fuel importers also questioned in the probe.⁵³ The pair face corruption and other charges.⁵⁴ Thant Sin, a Defense Services Academy classmate of Prime Minister Nyo Saw, reportedly landed the role of fuel import and distribution committee chairman via his close ties with the Prime Minister.⁵⁵ Insiders say his downfall stems from factional rivalry between Nyo Saw and Military Intelligence Chief General Ye Win Oo, whose agency arrested him.⁵⁶

On December 13, *The Irrawaddy* reported that SAC leader Min Aung Hlaing made a public vow on International Anti-Corruption Day to take tough, impartial action against graft and foster a corruption-free culture.⁵⁷ However, it has been reported that his adult children have amassed large fortunes and built business empires across numerous sectors including insurance, construction, weapons manufacturing and medical imports, with Min Aung Hlaing—dubbed "the contractor" by military insiders—by allegedly diverting army building projects to his son's firms and championing industries in which his son is involved, like EVs and solar power.⁵⁸ Further, Myanmar soldiers are reportedly required to buy life insurance from his son's company, channeling profits directly to the family.⁵⁹ There are additional reports that while the SAC's

anti-corruption efforts include a high-level committee to combat online fraud, its allied militias and Border Guard units allegedly remain deeply involved in the online fraud industry.⁶⁰

C. International Community / Sanctions

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow visited Myanmar on December 7 to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries.⁶¹ During the visit, he conveyed his hope that “the upcoming election in Myanmar [would] represent a political transition as part of the broader peace process.”⁶² During a meeting with Myanmar military government leaders, both parties reportedly expressed a mutual desire to see peace and development in Thai-Myanmar border areas and concurred that security operations near the border should be carried out with the utmost caution to avoid impact on civilians.⁶³

On December 11, the United Nations called for an investigation into the December 10 airstrike on the Mrauk-U Hospital in western Rakhine State that killed at least 33 people.⁶⁴ In a statement, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk stated that the “attacks may amount to a war crime” and called for “investigations and those responsible to be held to account.”⁶⁵ In a later statement, a spokesperson noted that “it was down to the national authorities to investigate but given the prevailing impunity in Myanmar, there were other means to hold perpetrators of abuses to account, including international courts and universal jurisdiction.”⁶⁶

The Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Norwegian Parliament has launched a probe into reports that state-controlled telecom company Telenor exposed hundreds of Myanmar opposition figures to arrest and detention during its exit from Myanmar by allegedly complying with a Myanmar military government demand to hand over the personal data.⁶⁷ The committee chair, Per-Willy Amundsen, has called the matter “extremely serious,” warning that the government, as majority owner, may share responsibility for human rights violations.⁶⁸

On December 16, the EU announced that it had allocated an additional €15 million in humanitarian aid to address the needs of communities impacted by the ongoing conflict in Myanmar.⁶⁹ In a statement, the EU noted that the “largest share of the humanitarian contribution, up to €12 million, will support the communities affected by the conflict in Myanmar . . . [and would] prioritize food and nutrition assistance.”⁷⁰ The additional aid package came in addition to the almost €50 million provided in humanitarian aid for the crisis in Myanmar and its regional impact.⁷¹

The International Court of Justice announced on December 19 that new public hearings in a case accusing Myanmar of genocide against its Muslim Rohingya minority will take place in January 2026.⁷² The announcement comes some seven years after the case was first filed by Gambia where the Myanmar military government was accused of “violating the UN genocide convention during a brutal crackdown by the army and Buddhist militias . . . in 2017.”⁷³ In a press release, the Hague-based court said that hearings would run from January 12 to 29 and will be “devoted to the merits of the case and will include the examination of witnesses and an expert called by the parties.”⁷⁴

On December 22, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk released a statement in relation to the Myanmar elections, noting that the “military authorities in Myanmar must stop using brutal violence to compel people to vote and stop arresting people for expressing any dissenting views.”⁷⁵ In the statement, Turk said that “civilians were being threatened by both the military authorities and armed opposition groups over their participation in the polls” and highlighted the “dozens of individuals who have reportedly been detained under the Election Protection Law.”⁷⁶ *The Irrawaddy* also reports that the Myanmar military government is barring independent domestic monitoring groups from observing the election.⁷⁷ One election observer said that in previous elections, groups were formed and registered with the election commission shortly before polling.⁷⁸ “This time, only organizations already registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs are allowed [to monitor the vote]” and “[i]n practice, almost no one is being approved.” he said.⁷⁹ Instead, around 60 observers from nine countries are expected to oversee voting, but they will be reportedly confined to embassy-appointed polling stations, according to a domestic monitor.⁸⁰

On December 30, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that leaders from ASEAN would consider developments in Myanmar following the first phase of its election over the weekend.⁸¹ In his statement, Ibrahim went on to say that ASEAN leaders would monitor the situation carefully and that “[a]ny assessment [would] proceed in a sequenced manner, guided by the need to reduce violence, avoid actions that could deepen divisions or confer premature legitimacy, and preserve the possibility of an inclusive and credible pathway forward.”⁸²

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

The Myanmar military regime is offering cash rewards for three anti-regime protest leaders, Dr. Tayzar San, Ko Nan Lin and Ko Khant Wai Phyo, all of whom staged an anti-election rally in early December.⁸³ According to residents, the authorities have promised to pay 20 million kyats (USD\$9,520) to anyone providing information about the protest leaders.⁸⁴

In advance of the December elections, former president of the Yadanabon University Students’ Union, Htet Myang Aung, was arrested on December 14 for his alleged “anti-junta activities.”⁸⁵ According to the General Strike Coordination Body, a network of unarmed anti-regime forces, the SAC arrested Htet Myat Aung with “severe physical violence.”⁸⁶ Htet Myat Aung was charged under Section 24(b) of the Election Protection Law.⁸⁷

On December 16, the SAC issued a warning in a SAC-run gazette, threatening to prosecute individuals who oppose SAC-approved projects, a move critics say is an attempt to silence resistance to controversial Chinese investments that the SAC is pushing to revive, including the Myitsone Dam project.⁸⁸ According to the announcement, “any individual or organization that complains about the government-approved projects without valid evidence will be punished under existing laws.”⁸⁹

The SAC announced on December 25 that it will lift a curfew that has been imposed in Yangon since the 2021 coup, just days before the start of the elections.⁹⁰ A statement shared by spokesman Zaw Min Tun said the decision was made “in order to improve economic, social and

religious matters, for the convenience of people's transportation and to improve business development."⁹¹

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

On December 2, reporter Sut Ring Pan (a/k/a Pu Noi Tsawms) was sentenced to 10 years in prison under the Counterterrorism Law.⁹² Sut Ring Pan, a freelance reporter for several news outlets, was arrested in September 2024 and initially sentenced to three years in prison under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code.⁹³ According to the Independent Myanmar Journalists Association, Myanmar soldiers beat, interrogated and tortured Sut Ring Pan in the weeks following her arrest.⁹⁴ Shawn Crispin of the Committee to Protect Journalists ("CPJ") urged the military government to release her, saying, "Myanmar's junta claims to be on a path back to democracy, but continues to sentence journalists to outrageously long prison terms for their reporting. It must stop treating journalists as criminals now."⁹⁵

The CPJ reported on December 4 that six journalists were released in the recent pre-election amnesty: Zaw Linn Htut (Phoe Thar), Htet Htet Khine, Nay Naw, Nyein Chan Wai, Aung San Lin and Sithu Aung Myint.⁹⁶ The amnesty appeared to prioritize the release of journalists who were imprisoned under Section 505(a), which criminalizes incitement and the dissemination of fake news.⁹⁷

On December 10, Amnesty International and the editor of *Myanmar Now*, Swe Win, urged the Myanmar military government to release Yangon photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaike, who was arrested in 2023 and subsequently sentenced to 20 years in prison for reporting on Cyclone Mocha.⁹⁸ Sai Zaw Thaike was allegedly withheld from receiving legal representation and was sentenced by a military tribunal under Section 505(a).⁹⁹ Sai Zaw Thaike's sentence is one of the longest known prison sentences imposed by the military government since the 2021 military coup.¹⁰⁰

Several "big tech" companies agreed on December 17 to remove pro-Myanmar military government propaganda channels, seemingly in response to pressure from Justice For Myanmar ("JFM").¹⁰¹ After JFM conducted a letter writing campaign, Twitch, Facebook, YouTube and MediaFire removed accounts from SAC-controlled *Myanmar Radio and Television* ("MRTV") and *Myanmar International TV* ("MITV").¹⁰² However, the following providers continue to host SAC accounts: Alphabet (the parent company of Google), Apple, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Telegram, Cloudflare and ApkPure.¹⁰³ "It is essential that these companies act now and terminate Myanmar military junta propaganda accounts and, in doing so, uphold human rights, protect users and ensure full compliance with international sanctions," said JFM's Yadanar Maung.¹⁰⁴ On or around December 23, Australian streaming company Kick also removed SAC-controlled propaganda accounts from MRTV and MITV.¹⁰⁵ The outlets began broadcasting on Kick after they were removed from Twitch.¹⁰⁶

On December 27, *Mizzima* reported that the SAC arrested and charged over 290 people under the Election Protection Law.¹⁰⁷ The Election Protection Law criminalizes wide-ranging actions including peaceful criticism, reporting, opinion-sharing, protests and alleged threats, characterizing such actions as "disruption."¹⁰⁸ The Myanmar military government has allegedly used the law to prosecute journalists, film directors and artists who posted reactions to the recent

elections on social media, and students putting up boycott stickers, according to the Asian Network for Free Elections.¹⁰⁹ “The junta is using its new bogus law as a weapon to silence anyone advocating for freedom and democracy,” according to John Quinley, Director at Fortify Rights.¹¹⁰

The Myanmar embassy in South Korea has reportedly blacklisted some participants of a December 7 anti-election protest in Daegu.¹¹¹ The rally was organized by the Myanmar Federal Democratic Movement Coalition with support from the NUG’s office in South Korea, the Anti-Coup Committee, and other anti-regime groups.¹¹² More than 300 Myanmar nationals joined the protest against the planned election.¹¹³ South Korea’s Ministry of Justice said the blacklisting will not affect residency rights.¹¹⁴ Since January 2025, Myanmar nationals struggling to renew passports have been granted humanitarian visas (G-1-99), allowing them to remain in South Korea until conditions in Myanmar stabilize.¹¹⁵ Over 6,000 Myanmar citizens reside in the country under this visa category.¹¹⁶

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko visited Naypyitaw on November 27 at Min Aung Hlaing’s invitation.¹¹⁷ During the trip, the two sides signed 16 memoranda of understanding covering military cooperation as well as trade and investment.¹¹⁸ Lukashenko declared that Belarus could supply Myanmar with its needs in exchange for goods and sectors required by Belarus, pledging to deepen bilateral economic engagement.¹¹⁹ At a bilateral economic forum in Yangon, the two sides agreed to promote agricultural and food trade, with Myanmar offering rice, rubber, nuts, fruits and coffee exports, while Belarus proposed supplying dairy and butter.¹²⁰ Further, Belarusian pharmaceutical firms Belmedpreparaty and Minskinterkaps signed deals to supply medicines to Myanmar during the forum, while Belarus’s foreign minister announced contracts worth US\$9 million, according to SAC media.¹²¹ Min Aung Hlaing claimed during his March visit to Minsk that bilateral trade between the two countries was steadily increasing.¹²² However, official records show no Belarusian investment in Myanmar. Between January and June 2025, Myanmar received \$254 million in foreign investment, but none came from Belarus, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission.¹²³

Russia is set to deliver suicide drones to Myanmar’s military following a November shipment of reconnaissance drones and anti-drone equipment, according to Intelligence Online, an investigative intelligence publication.¹²⁴ Ukraine’s GUR military intelligence reported that a shipment of Orlan-30s and RB-504A-E anti-drone systems arrived in Myanmar last month.¹²⁵ The devices were made by St. Petersburg-based Russian defense manufacturer Special Technology Center and exported to Myanmar by the state-owned export agency Rosoboronexport.¹²⁶

Gem traders in major cities like Yangon, Mandalay, and Sagaing are being repeatedly summoned and interrogated by the military regime over alleged links to resistance groups, according to industry sources.¹²⁷ Business owners said the Myanmar President’s Office recently sent warning letters to local associations and traders via the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.¹²⁸ The letters reportedly warn gem traders to avoid

contact with resistance organizations and to report any information about anti-regime activities immediately, a gems trader told *The Irrawaddy*.¹²⁹ The government claims the questioning is part of efforts to combat money laundering, but merchants say the real focus is on whether they are supporting resistance groups.¹³⁰

At least 15 business owners in Mon State have been arrested in a regime crackdown on tax evasion and funding of anti-regime groups, according to business sources.¹³¹ Raids ordered by the Myanmar Ministry of Planning and Finance reportedly focused on fuel and food importers and gold dealers.¹³² According to *the Irrawaddy*, the arrests follow raids conducted by township-level military intelligence and the Special Investigation Department in June and July.¹³³ The inspections reportedly extended beyond income and expenditure records to donations and financial contributions, in what appears to be an effort to identify business owners financially supporting anti-regime groups.¹³⁴

The SAC has ordered fuel importers to repay more than 540 billion kyats (US\$257 million) by the end of January, accusing them of dollar manipulation that cost the state billions over the past four months.¹³⁵ Business owners say they have been warned that failure to comply will result in criminal charges of fraud and breach of trust.¹³⁶ The order follows investigations last month into alleged irregularities in fuel imports, including dollar speculation and bribery.¹³⁷ Among those interrogated were Deputy Energy Minister Thant Sin and Director-General Shwe Maw.¹³⁸ Thant Sin was dismissed from his post on November 25.¹³⁹

The Yangon Region Investment Committee endorsed seven foreign enterprises and one joint venture to make investments of US\$12.408 million in the manufacturing sector, creating 6,786 jobs for locals.¹⁴⁰

Myanmar's Investment Commission has approved 14 new projects worth US\$57.295 million and MMK 45.502 billion during its December 8 meeting, along with capital increases for six existing projects.¹⁴¹ The newly approved ventures, comprising five foreign and nine local investments across industrial, hotel and tourism and services sectors, are expected to create about 4,119 jobs.¹⁴² Key projects include electric three-wheeler and vehicle assembly, education services, food production and garment manufacturing.¹⁴³

Chubb, a major U.S. insurance company operating in Myanmar since 2019, is reportedly exiting the country after suspending its operations, leading to widespread criticism from customers and agents.¹⁴⁴ A leaked company letter indicates that Chubb Life Insurance Myanmar has asked regulators to allow it to surrender its license and shut down due to operational and economic challenges, while announcing it will cancel all policies sold after December 15 and refund premiums in full.¹⁴⁵ Customers and agents say that the move leaves policyholders without protection, fails to account for inflation losses and lacks transparency, with some calling for policy transfers to other insurers instead of refunds.¹⁴⁶

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

The SAC formed a national-level Project Steering Committee to advance the construction of the Muse-Mandalay railway, a key segment of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. The formation of the committee comes as the Myanmar military,

backed by Chinese pressure, regains control of parts of northern Shan State.¹⁴⁷ 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.¹⁴⁸ During his August trip to China, Min Aung Hlaing publicly thanked Chinese President Xi Jinping for Beijing's assistance in helping the Myanmar military regain control of certain Shan State towns.¹⁴⁹ However, despite the China-brokered ceasefire agreements in Shan State, the ethnic armed groups still control vital stretches of the area.¹⁵⁰

The SAC is also pushing to revive the Myitsone hydropower project in Kachin State, which was first launched in 2009 with an estimated investment of US \$7.2 billion.¹⁵¹ The project, located about 32 kilometers from Myitkyina, was designed to generate nearly 20,000 megawatts, most of it for export to China.¹⁵² It was suspended in 2011 under then-President Thein Sein's government following nationwide opposition from civil society groups, environmentalists, political activists and local Kachin communities.¹⁵³ Opponents warned of the devastating impact on the Irrawaddy River's flow, displacement of local communities, possible damage to biodiversity and livelihoods downstream and catastrophic risks due to its proximity to Myanmar's largest seismic fissure, the Sagaing Fault, 25 km away.¹⁵⁴ The Kachin Independence Organization and its armed wing have rejected the planned revival, saying any restart of the project must reflect the will of the people.¹⁵⁵

The United Nations said December 3 that Myanmar's opium poppy cultivation has hit its highest level in a decade, with early indications that its heroin output is being trafficked to Western markets.¹⁵⁶ Analysts say illicit activities are key income sources funding the civil war in Myanmar.¹⁵⁷ This year, opium poppies were farmed on more than 53,000 hectares of Myanmar's soil, a UN Office on Drugs and Crime report said, recording the largest territory since 2015.¹⁵⁸

Farmers in southern Sagaing Region are reportedly increasingly abandoning traditional crops in favor of cannabis, lured by soaring profits amid deepening conflict and economic collapse.¹⁵⁹ Several villages in Ayadaw Township and its border with Myinmu—once known for rice, beans, betel nut, and cotton—have shifted to growing hemp since 2022-23.¹⁶⁰ Locals say the move was driven by rising costs and pest infestations in betel nut plantations.¹⁶¹ Residents estimate at least five acres of cannabis are now grown in each village, with six neighboring villages accounting for more than 30 acres.¹⁶² While some farmers conceal their crops inside fields or along fences, others plant them openly by roadsides.¹⁶³ Buyers reportedly come directly to villages.¹⁶⁴ Locals claim that local defense, administration and law enforcement units help distribute cannabis seeds.¹⁶⁵

C. Land Seizure

The *Arakan News Agency* reported that Arakan militias began seizing agricultural land and cemetery grounds owned by Rohingya civilians in April 2025 and the seizures are continuing.¹⁶⁶ Confiscated lands reportedly include rice fields that Rohingya have relied on as a primary source of livelihood and traditional cemeteries used for ancestral burials.¹⁶⁷ In addition, Rohingya have been allegedly barred from cultivating the confiscated lands while the Arakan militia have allowed grazing of livestock on the seized lands in exchange for money.¹⁶⁸

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

B. Peace Talks

Despite the recent election, Min Aung Hlaing said the Myanmar military will “continue to play a leading role in politics until ethnic armed groups no longer exist.”¹⁶⁹

¹ The Irrawaddy, December 3, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/toddler-and-family-killed-as-myanmar-junta-ramps-up-election-bombing-campaign.html>.

² *Id.*

³ The Irrawaddy, December 11, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/hospital-massacre-in-mrauk-u-junta-airstrike-kills-33-injures-76.html>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ The Irrawaddy, December 12, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/un-demands-probe-after-junta-attack-on-myanmar-hospital.html>.

⁶ The Irrawaddy, December 17, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/junta-chief-hails-myanmar-air-force-as-civilian-death-toll-mounts.html>.

⁷ The Irrawaddy, December 13, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-continues-rakhine-airstrikes-after-hospital-massacre.html>.

⁸ The Irrawaddy, December 19, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/civilian-casualties-surge-as-junta-rafes-bombs-and-rockets-ahead-of-myanmar-poll.html>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ The Irrawaddy, December 23, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/fleeing-civilians-bombed-as-myanmar-junta-scorches-mandalay-sagaing-river-crossings.html>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² The Irrawaddy, December 19, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/civilian-casualties-surge-as-junta-rafes-bombs-and-rockets-ahead-of-myanmar-poll.html>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ The Irrawaddy, December 25, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/war-against-the-junta/myanmar-junta-escalates-attacks-on-civilians-in-election-countdown.html>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ The Irrawaddy, December 28, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-juntas-election-opens-amid-airstrikes-and-sparse-turnout.html>.

²¹ The Irrawaddy, December 28, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/security-tightened-after-resistance-blasts-on-election-eve.html>.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ The Irrawaddy, December 30, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/politics/myanmar-juntas-proxy-party-claims-80-election-landslide.html>.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

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- ³⁰ The Irrawaddy, December 3, 2025: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/two-units-under-myanmars-nug-accused-of-unlawful-detention-killings.html>.
- ³¹ *Id.*
- ³² *Id.*
- ³³ *Id.*
- ³⁴ *Id.*
- ³⁵ *Id.*
- ³⁶ *Id.*
- ³⁷ *Id.*
- ³⁸ *Id.*
- ³⁹ *Id.*
- ⁴⁰ *Id.*
- ⁴¹ *Id.*
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