

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR

APRIL 2026 REPORT

Summary. This report reviews the April 2026 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar.

I.	Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance.....	2
II.	Political Developments.....	3
A.	Rohingya Refugee Crisis.....	3
B.	Corruption.....	4
C.	International Community / Sanctions.....	4
III.	Civil and Political Rights.....	5
A.	Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association.....	5
B.	Freedom of the Press and Censorship.....	5
IV.	Economic Development.....	6
A.	Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment.....	6
B.	Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects.....	7
C.	Land Seizure.....	7
V.	Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence.....	8
A.	Ethnic Violence.....	8
B.	Peace Talks.....	8

I. Coup, Crackdown on Protests and Civilian Resistance

On April 1, four Myanmar military fighter jets reportedly bombed the Arakan Army (“AA”)-held town of Thandwe and the adjacent beach resort area of Ngapali in Rakhine State, killing four civilians, including children, and injuring three others.¹ The AA condemned the attack as the first war crime committed under the regime’s new military chief General Ye Win Oo, who had assumed command of the armed forces from Min Aung Hlaing two days prior.² On April 19, three fighter jets reportedly conducted seven airstrikes against an ethnic youth development vocational training center and an electricity supply station in AA-administered Ponnagyun town in northern Rakhine, destroying both facilities along with six civilian homes and injuring a resident; a separate fighter jet reportedly struck a village in Ponnagyun the same afternoon, killing one civilian.³

On April 12, the Karen National Union (“KNU”), People Defense Forces (“PDF”) and All Burma Students’ Democratic Front (“ABSDF”) seized the Lay Kay military base in Mon State’s Billin Township.⁴ This base housed the Myanmar military’s Light Infantry Battalion 2.⁵ Twelve Myanmar military soldiers were reportedly killed in the attack, along with three allied fighters.⁶

Between April 10 and April 16, the Myanmar military allegedly conducted a sustained series of airstrikes on civilian targets in Mutraw (Hpapun) District of Kayin State, an area under the control of the Karen National Liberation Army (“KNLA”), killing four civilians and injuring fourteen others and destroying dozens of civilian buildings including clinics, schools, churches and a monastery.⁷ The strikes reportedly included an attack on the night of April 10 on Paw Hta village in Bu Tho township, in which two bombs killed one 80-year-old man, injured three others and destroyed four houses and a monastery.⁸ A reported strike the following night on Oo Mi Hta village in the same township destroyed two clinic buildings; and on the night of April 13 a jet fighter allegedly dropped a cluster bomb on Day Bu Noh village in Lu Thaw township.⁹ The following morning, as a funeral was being held for the April 13 airstrike victims at Kheh Pa Hta village, two fighter jets reportedly dropped eight bombs and opened fire with Oerlikon cannons on the gathering, injuring eleven civilians in total across the two days and destroying 28 houses, two church buildings, a school chapel and a student dormitory.¹⁰ On April 18, the KNU issued a formal statement condemning the attacks as deliberate war crimes and calling on ASEAN member states and the broader international community to take concrete measures to halt the regime’s alleged airstrikes on civilians.¹¹

In simultaneous attacks on April 19, regime aircraft allegedly dropped 500-pound bombs twice on Kyauk Se Pyin village, an ethnic Mro settlement near the border of Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw townships, with the second strike reportedly directly hitting the village monastery, seriously injuring eight men and two women.¹²

On the morning of April 20, fighter jets reportedly dropped approximately ten bombs on Oo Mae Hta Hospital along the Salween River in KNLA territory, destroying two hospital buildings and a nearby Christian church.¹³ No casualties were reported as patients and staff had taken shelter in anticipation of the strike, though one bomb crossed the border into Thai territory near the Mae Sam Laep area of Mae Hong Son Province, prompting Thai authorities to evacuate local residents as a precaution.¹⁴

On April 29, a Myanmar military aircraft reportedly conducted two bombing sorties over a mining site and adjacent village in Payathonsu, Kayin State, dropping twelve bombs and injuring at least twelve civilians.¹⁵

In Hpakant Township, Kachin State, where regime forces have been conducting a sustained ground and artillery offensive in the jade-mining area, indiscriminate artillery fire allegedly targeted civilians on two occasions in mid-April. In the late hours of April 18, shells reportedly struck a Kachin residential house in the Sine Taung (Mawlakin) area, killing one man.¹⁶ In the early hours of April 19, further artillery fire hit Malan village in the same township, killing a four-year-old child.¹⁷

On the evening of April 21, regime troops and allied Warazut militia forces entered Aungyar Village in Lone Khin village tract, Hpakant Township, and reportedly stormed Mai Hospital, forcing medical workers to kneel in the lobby, assaulting a doctor and detaining 21 hospital staff.¹⁸ A simultaneous raid on the nearby Uyusut Guesthouse in the same village reportedly resulted in the detention of eleven more people, bringing the total detained to thirty-two.¹⁹ Critics allege that the regime targeted the facility due to its treatment of wounded resistance fighters.²⁰

II. Political Developments

A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Approximately 250 Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals were reported missing after a boat capsized in the Andaman Sea, the United Nations refugee agency and the International Organization for Migration (“IOM”) said on April 14.²¹ Loaded with men, women and children, the trawler reportedly sank due to strong winds, rough seas and overcrowding, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (“UNHCR”) and the IOM said in a joint statement.²² The trawler had departed Teknaf in southern Bangladesh and was attempting to reach Malaysia, according to reports.²³ The Bangladesh coastguard said one of its vessels, which was on the way to Indonesia, managed to rescue nine people from the capsized trawler on April 9.²⁴ According to Turkey’s *Andalou* news agency, of the nine rescued, six were alleged to be involved in human trafficking.²⁵ They have been detained, according to police.²⁶

In a statement issued on April 15, IOM called on states in the region to uphold their obligations under international maritime law, including strengthening search-and-rescue efforts and ensuring the safe and timely disembarkation of those rescued.²⁷ IOM urged the international community to step up solidarity and sustain funding for refugees and host communities in Bangladesh, as well as to address the root causes of displacement in Myanmar and enable conditions for safe and dignified return and reintegration.²⁸

Over 1,100 volunteer teachers in Rohingya refugee camps are, for the first time, receiving formal training certificates, recognizing their skills and strengthening classroom learning.²⁹ The certification was awarded through a joint initiative by UNICEF and the Asian University for

Women, in collaboration with the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner and the Government of Bangladesh.³⁰

On April 6, a Rohingya woman who fled from Myanmar and other persons, including former Indonesian Attorney General Marzuki Darusman and representatives of local rights group KontraS, filed a complaint with Indonesia's attorney general against Myanmar president-elect Min Aung Hlaing for alleged rights abuses against the Rohingya.³¹ According to a spokesman for the Indonesian prosecutor's office, the office will forward the complaint to a division of the attorney general's office that specializes in serious crimes.³² The complaint alleges crimes against humanity and genocide committed against the Rohingya people in Myanmar by the military junta.³³

B. Corruption

On April 8, *The Irrawaddy* reported that China was the driving force behind the abrupt dismissal in late March of Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun, who had served as the regime's chief spokesman since the 2021 coup.³⁴ According to a source familiar with the matter, Chinese Special Envoy Deng Xijun provided evidence during his March 13 visit to Naypyitaw that Zaw Min Tun had brokered the sale of restricted Chinese drones to a Myanmar company in violation of Beijing's export controls.³⁵ Min Aung Hlaing ordered an investigation, and Zaw Min Tun admitted to earning a brokerage fee of approximately US\$20,000 from the transaction, triggering his immediate removal from all three of his posts: Deputy Minister of Information, Director of Army Public Relations and Psychological Warfare and information chief of the National Defense and Security Council.³⁶

C. International Community / Sanctions

On March 31, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ("ASEAN") Parliamentarians for Human Rights condemned the Myanmar regime's plan to install Min Aung Hlaing as president, following his resignation as commander-in-chief.³⁷ In a statement, the group warned that recognition of his presidency would legitimize violent military rule that has "caused immense suffering, deep social fractures, and undermined democracy and human rights."³⁸ They further condemned the recent presidential election, dismissing it as "a regime-controlled sham to consolidate its power and evade accountability rather than a true reflection of the people's will."³⁹

On April 1, the Kachin State Human Rights Defender Network, a human rights group consisting of six member organizations "aiming to protect and promote the human rights of the people of Kachin State," released a statement warning that the Myanmar regime is "employing coercive measures and incentives to threaten and manipulate residents" to revive a China-backed hydropower project in Myintkyina."⁴⁰ In its statement, the human rights group demanded the Myanmar regime end legal threats against local opponents to the project, who were told action would be taken against them if they opposed the dam project "without solid evidence."⁴¹

On April 21, the Thai government issued an urgent order to tighten security across its four western border provinces following a bomb from a Myanmar military airstrike reportedly

landing on Thai soil the previous day.⁴² According to Thai media, “the bombing triggered an urgent evacuation of residents on the Thai side of the Salween River in Mae Hong Son province” and led the Interior Ministry to order officials to “tighten security, stay alert for border fighting, and ensure round-the-clock assistance for affected [Thai] communities.”⁴³

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Naypyitaw on April 25 and promised that China would “stand firmly by the regime on the international stage and accelerate joint projects [with Myanmar]” following the Myanmar presidential election. In his statements, Wang Yi noted that China would “continue to speak up for Myanmar on the international stage and closely coordinate with Myanmar under the frameworks of the UN, China-ASEAN cooperation, and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation.” During his visit to Naypyitaw, Wang Yi also agreed to work with the Myanmar regime to “push forward with implementation of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor . . . and expand cooperation on other projects.”⁴⁴

On April 28, in his final dispatch to the UN, the UN special rapporteur on human rights, Tom Andrews, urged international governments to ramp up efforts for accountability, noting that “decades of impunity have led the country to a human rights catastrophe.”⁴⁵ He also called for the international community to dismantle the Myanmar military’s “capacity to attack and oppress its people” and to hold “those responsible for grave human rights violations to account.”⁴⁶

III. Civil and Political Rights

A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

The Swedish non-profit Justice and Accountability Initiative filed a civil class action suit on April 8 against Norway’s state-controlled telecom giant Telenor, claiming damages on behalf of Myanmar customers whose private data was reportedly shared with the military regime.⁴⁷ In the suit, the non-profit alleges that “Telenor handed over users’ private data to military authorities following the coup, directly facilitating human rights abuses.”⁴⁸ The disclosures allegedly “included call logs and location data; names, addresses and ID numbers; and Facebook and bank accounts linked to mobile numbers” which the Myanmar regime “regularly requested . . . to prosecute individuals suspected of opposing military rule, reportedly leading to arbitrary arrests, torture and even executions.”⁴⁹ In addition to the class action suit, the widow of a prominent lawmaker and rapper, Phyo Zeyar Thaw, and Aung Thu, a pro-democracy activist are seeking individual damages.⁵⁰ Phyo Zeyar Thaw was executed in 2022 after Telenor allegedly handed over the requested data to the Myanmar regime despite an internal assessment that this disclosure was likely to lead to his arrest.⁵¹

B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship

On April 8, Amnesty International staged a protest at the Myanmar Embassy in Thailand, urging Myanmar’s regime to release *Myanmar Now* photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaïke.⁵² Amnesty highlighted 3,008 petitions, postcards, and letters from activists demanding Sai Zaw Thaïke’s release.⁵³ The Myanmar regime arrested the photojournalist in May 2023 while he was reporting on the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha in Rakhine State.⁵⁴ He was sentenced to 20 years in prison with hard labor, and has allegedly faced physical abuse and solitary confinement.⁵⁵ On April 9,

Myanmar Now reported that Sai Zaw Thaike is seriously ill and Insein Prison authorities are denying him access to treatment.⁵⁶ On April 27, the Committee to Protect Journalists urged the regime to grant him access to appropriate medical treatment.⁵⁷

On April 17, the military regime released filmmaker Shin Daewe from prison.⁵⁸ Shin Daewe was arrested in Yangon in October 2023 while picking up a drone camera.⁵⁹ Military police reportedly interrogated her for approximately two weeks before she was taken to Insein Prison.⁶⁰ Shin Daewe is an award-winning documentarian who previously reported for *Democratic Voice of Burma* and *Radio Free Asia*.⁶¹ In 2023, she made a video documentary about industrialization, deforestation and the effects of climate change on the Ayeyarwady River, Myanmar's primary waterway.⁶² Reporters Without Borders published a statement celebrating Shin Daewe's release and urging the regime to release the 40 journalists who remain in detention.⁶³

Tin Nyunt, a National Literature Award-winning writer, along with his son and a woman who sold his books were arrested on April 23.⁶⁴ The author was charged under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code and is being detained at the Thanlyin police station in Yangon Region.⁶⁵ The arrests reportedly relate to three books Tin Nyunt published in 2017, *Hkway Htein Nga Tar, I Lied to the Generals* and *U Than Shwe's Yadaya Rituals*.⁶⁶ *The Irrawaddy* criticized the arrest, saying that it "shows that Myanmar's so-called transition is a puppet show in which the generals have changed costumes but kept the same script."⁶⁷

On April 24, the Ministry of Information announced that it had revoked the publishing licenses of three Chin State media outlets, *Khonumthung Media Group*, *Chin World* and *Nowadays News*, effectively banning them.⁶⁸ *Khonumthung* and *Nowadays News* responded they will continue to broadcast the news in defiance of the ban.⁶⁹ On April 24, *Nowadays News* issued a statement, saying "The regime's announcement regarding the closure is illegitimate, and we will not pay any attention to it. No matter the obstacles, we will continue to broadcast the news that the public deserves to know through various means."⁷⁰ Since the 2021 coup, the regime has revoked the licenses of at least 18 independent media outlets; and approximately 64 media outlets have been forced to set up operations in exile.⁷¹

IV. Economic Development

A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment

Myanmar has introduced a fuel-saving plan that encourages motorists to trade in older gasoline-powered vehicles for electric vehicles ("EVs"), aiming to reduce the country's fuel dependence amid rising global energy costs.⁷² The policy comes alongside strict fuel-saving measures such as rationing, odd-even driving rules and remote work mandates, all of which have boosted demand for EVs, driving up their prices.⁷³ Critics say the scheme disproportionately benefits businesses linked to the General Min Aung Hlaing's family, who dominate Myanmar's EV import market and infrastructure.⁷⁴

Facing a worsening fuel crisis, Myanmar's military-led administration has rapidly expanded energy cooperation with Chinese state-owned companies.⁷⁵ On April 10, Energy Minister Ko Ko Lwin signed a deal with China's North Petro-Chem Corporation Limited to

boost production at the Htauk Shar Pin–Kanni oil field in Magwe Region.⁷⁶ Soon after, Ko Ko Lwin met firms in Kunming, Yunnan, including China Southern Power Grid, Yunnan Energy Group, Union Resource & Engineering, and Yunnan Xianshang Export and Import Co., to negotiate long-term fuel imports at lower prices, though no concrete terms or timeline were disclosed.⁷⁷ Myanmar, which imports about 97% of its fuel, is also advancing projects such as the Thanbayakan Refinery in Magwe, designed to process up to 2 million tons of crude annually using supply from the Myanmar–China pipeline.⁷⁸ The minister then traveled to Beijing, where he held further talks with companies such as China Railway Beijing Engineering Group, MEIGE Joint Energy Holding and Yunnan–Irrawaddy Supply Chain on oil exploration, refinery construction and broader supply chain cooperation.⁷⁹ Discussions also covered electricity initiatives such as cross-border power links with Laos, hydropower development in northern Myanmar and solar-powered EV charging solutions.⁸⁰

Following his trip to China, Energy Minister Ko Ko Lwin met with Russian firms to negotiate discounted supplies of crude oil, liquified natural gas (“LNG”), liquefied petroleum gas and fertilizer, and held talks with Russian energy company Inter RAO on building a coal-fired power plant, oil refinery and LNG facilities at the Dawei deep-sea port.⁸¹ During the visit, Ko Ko Lwin also signed an agreement with RC Investments, while holding meetings with Russian energy minister Sergei Tsivilev and presidential adviser Anton Kobyakov to explore concessional loans and expand energy projects.⁸²

SHOP APP MM, one of Myanmar’s largest online shopping platforms and a subsidiary of Alibaba Group, has announced it will cease operations.⁸³ The company accepted final orders until April 29 and has committed to responsibly completing all outstanding orders, deliveries, returns and refunds, ensuring a smooth transition as it winds down its business.⁸⁴

B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects

The Myanmar regime has intensified efforts to revive the long-suspended Myitsone Dam, holding its latest public meeting on the China-backed project in Kachin State on April 25.⁸⁵ The push coincided with a high-profile visit to Naypyitaw by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who pledged support and deeper investment ties for the country’s new military-dominated administration.⁸⁶ According to regime media, more than 760 people joined the event, including regime-appointed Kachin State Chief Minister Khet Htein Nam, departmental staff, faith leaders and students from local colleges.⁸⁷ Khet Htein Nam told the gathering the dam was vital for local electricity needs and regional development.⁸⁸ He spoke as Myitkyina and Waingmaw residents entered their second week of blackouts after the shutdown of the Chipwe Nge hydropower plant for maintenance on April 18.⁸⁹ He urged cooperation with the restart plan, saying it would bring “better opportunities for future generations.”⁹⁰ The Myitsone Dam— a 6,000-MW, US\$3.6-billion megaproject located 3.2 km south of the Mali Kha-N’Mai Kha river confluence—was suspended in 2011 after nationwide protests over seismic risks, mass displacement, and environmental damage.⁹¹

C. Land Seizure

There have been no material updates since the prior report.

V. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence

A. Ethnic Violence

Throughout April, the regime reportedly escalated its naval presence along the southern Rakhine coast, deploying approximately ten warships in waters off the AA-controlled townships of Taungup, Ramree and Thandwe, operating substantially closer to shore than before and reportedly detaining and firing upon civilian fishing boats, prompting many fishermen to cease operations.⁹² Military analysts assess the buildup as preparation for potential amphibious operations to retake AA-held territory.⁹³

In a speech on April 10 marking the AA's Armed Forces Day, AA Commander-in-Chief Tun Myat Naing declared the group's intention to seize the remaining three regime-held townships in Rakhine State by the end of 2026 or in 2027, vowing to advance until complete victory is achieved.⁹⁴

Myanmar military forces recaptured Chin State's second city Falam from resistance groups on April 24 after a six-month offensive.⁹⁵ Falam is the only township in the state with an airport. The Chin Brotherhood had captured the city on April 8, 2025.⁹⁶

On April 24, the KNLA launched an attack on the regime's last stronghold in Waw Lay.⁹⁷ The attack was met with air and artillery strikes by regime forces.⁹⁸ Twelve civilians were reported to have been injured during the attack and counterattack.⁹⁹

B. Peace Talks

On April 20, Min Aung Hlaing invited certain ethnic armed organizations to gather for peace talks to take place within 100 days, urging that the groups must come together by July 31.¹⁰⁰ Three groups singled out in the offer—the KNU, the Chin National Front and the All Burma Students' Democratic Front—immediately rejected the invitation.¹⁰¹

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