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New weapons law leads to roundup of activists and fighters in Myanmar cities

More than 20 people were accused of being People's Defense Force members or funding guerilla groups.

A new weapons law introduced by Myanmar's military has led to a junta roundup of people accused of belonging to, or financing, anti-junta People's Defense Forces, according to Saya Kyaung, an official of Yangon Underground Association People's Defense Force.

His comments come after junta-controlled newspapers reported Monday on the arrests of eight alleged members of the Royal Phoenix Guerrilla Force in Mandalay, along with five people accused of funding them.

The arrested include the leader of the guerrilla force, Pyae Nyein Chan, and his second-in-command, Chan Myae Oo, the papers said.

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New weapons law leads to accusations concerning belonging to or financing anti-junta People's Defense Forces

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Chan Myae Oo was arrested in Mandalay on April 6 and the rest were arrested over several days from May 18, reports said.

A member of the Royal Phoenix Guerrilla Force, who did not want to be named for security reasons, confirmed to RFA Tuesday that some members had been arrested but said civilians unconnected to the group had also been picked up by junta authorities.

“Khing Khing Aung, who was among the arrested, was a civilian. She had already been arrested under Section 505 (a) and recently released from prison,” he said, referring to a section of the Penal Code that was amended after the February 2021 coup to criminalize the spreading of fake news and incitement against a junta employee.

“Now she has been accused of giving financial support [to the guerrilla force] and arrested on the night of May 18.”

He said the military closely watches people freed after allegedly committing political crimes and often rearrests them when something happens in their neighborhoods.

Newspapers reported that the three women and two men arrested along with guerrilla members had been charged with financing People’s Defense Forces and keeping hand-made mines.

They said the eight alleged guerrilla force members had detonated nine mines in Mandalay and Sagaing regions, killing a policeman and two civilians.

New weapons law

The junta-controlled newspapers also reported Sunday on the May 12 arrests of 10 people, including four alleged members of the Yangon

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Revolution Force.

Five people were accused of giving information to the People's Defense Force and one of funding it.

They were all charged in connection with the murders of Sai Kyaw Thu, the deputy director general of the junta-appointed Union Election Commission, and his wife.

The [weapons law](#) enacted on May 11 allows junta courts to impose the death penalty on members of any armed opposition group.

It states that anyone armed with intent to rebel against the state, or stealing and selling state-owned arms and ammunition belonging to a person authorized to bear arms, faces a minimum of five years in prison and a maximum of life in prison or the death penalty.

Saya Kyaung, an official of Yangon Underground Association, which fights junta forces in Myanmar's commercial capital, told RFA the law is intended to weaken any attempts at an armed people's revolution and to instill fear in the population.

More than 3,500 civilians have been killed and over 22,600 pro-democracy campaigners have been arrested since the Feb. 1, 2021 coup, according to the [Assistance Association for Political Prisoners](#).

Translated by RFA Burmese. Edited by Mike Firn.

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