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The State of the World's Human Rights; Myanmar 2024

The internal armed conflict escalated. The frequency of military air strikes increased, as did military attacks on schools, hospitals and civilian infrastructure. The conflict and military repression deprived people of their right to education. Ethnic Rohingya people experienced the worst violence since 2017. Arbitrary arrests continued, with unfair trials and raids targeting activists. Journalists were subjected to harsh prison sentences, creating a chilling effect and further restricting the rights to freedom of expression. Shipments of aviation fuel still reached the country despite sanctions and global campaigns to disrupt the supply chain to prevent air strikes.

Background

Military rule continued after the ousting of the democratically elected government on 1 February 2021. Senior General and coup leader, Min Aung Hlaing, continued to lead the State Administration Council, the official name for the junta. He also assumed the post of acting president from Myint Swe, who was said to be suffering from health problems. Nearly four years after the coup, Myanmar's human rights situation entered a new and deadly phase. The country's western, northern and south-eastern border areas were riven by internal armed conflict.

Powerful ethnic armed organizations continued to align with the People's Defence Forces, the armed wing of the opposition National Unity Government, which emerged in the aftermath of the coup, even as alliances within the groups started to fracture. The military struggled to hold onto territory, losing towns, bases, outposts and police stations. Cities with large populations, including Myanmar's second-biggest, Mandalay, were affected by the fighting. The risk to civilians increased, as Myanmar's military responded with ever harsher force. Air strikes reached record numbers, up five-fold in the first six months of the year compared to the previous year. The number of internally displaced people surpassed

three million. More than 20,000 people remained behind bars. The number of people killed by the military during the year surpassed 6,000.

Military air strikes reached unprecedented levels, mainly as part of counteroffensives against Operation 1027. Named after its start date on 27 October 2023, Operation 1027 was a burst of anti-military assaults led by three ethnic armed organizations: the Arakan Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army. Starting in Shan State and pausing for the first half of 2024 after a China-brokered ceasefire, the operation then recommenced and spread to several parts of the country. Joined by People's Defence Forces, Operation 1027 fighters captured entire towns, strategic roads, an airport and two of 14 regional military commands.

In November, the ICC Prosecutor's Office sought an arrest warrant for Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for the crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya people during military operations in 2017.

Unlawful attacks and killings

The nature of the military counteroffensive was in keeping with past practice, namely indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks paired with deadly ground raids. Military air strikes hit religious buildings, schools, hospitals and areas where internally displaced people were sheltering, including a camp and a monastery. Operation 1027 members were also accused of abuses, including the forced recruitment of civilians.

In January, Myanmar military air strikes killed 17 civilians – including nine children – as they gathered to attend church in Sagaing Region's Kanan village near the western border with India.¹

On 9 May, the Myanmar military launched an attack on a monastery in Saw Township's Ah Kyi Pan Pa Lon village in central Myanmar's Magway Region. After two initial air strikes, witnesses said that the fighter jet then circled back and directed heavy gunfire at those fleeing the initial explosions. The attacks killed 12 civilians and injured 26. The monastery, which was believed to be roughly 100 years old, was destroyed.² Also in May, the military raided Byaing Phyu village near Rakhine State's capital Sittwe, targeting civilians from the ethnic Rakhine group due to their perceived affiliation with the Arakan Army. At least 50 people were killed.

On 19 June, a senior religious figure in Myanmar's Buddhist community, Bhaddanta Muninda Bhivamsa, was shot and killed while travelling in a car in Mandalay Region's Ngazun Township. The 78-year-old was the head abbot of Win Neinmitayon Monastery in Bago Region. He was travelling with another monk who was injured along with the driver. Later accounts

said that soldiers fired on them after their car tried to pass a military truck in a conflict area.

On 5 August, a drone and mortar attack on Rohingya people fleeing fighting in northern Rakhine State killed an estimated 200 men, women and children, the worst attack against the Rohingya since 2017.³ Members of the community blamed the Arakan Army, one of the three groups involved in Operation 1027 against the military. In an official response to Amnesty International, it denied the allegation.

On 5 September, the military carried out an air strike on a camp of internally displaced people in southern Shan State's Pekon Township, killing an estimated eight civilians including six children. One resident said there was no fighting nearby and that there were only "helpless women and children" displaced by armed conflict.

Economic, social and cultural rights

The military carried out unlawful attacks on schools, killing and injuring students and teachers and further violating the right to education among other rights. Although the development of an education system in areas under the opposition's control enabled students to continue their studies, military attacks and intensified armed conflict put further strain on teaching providers. Many were forced to build bomb shelters on school grounds, rebuild schools after bombings, or turn them into mobile education units to avoid becoming targets.

On 6 February, an air strike hit a school in Daw Sei Ei village in Karenni State, killing four children. The 5 September bombing of the camp for internally displaced people in southern Shan state killed and displaced students. By the end of the year, more than 750 children had been killed or injured across Myanmar.

The enduring disruption to education, which had started during the pandemic, led many to abandon their studies. The coup and its aftermath had a severe impact on access to education in the country. Millions were not attending class in a formal school setting, and more than 13,000 schools were reportedly forced to close due to armed conflict. Some parents withdrew their children from school and fled to Thailand out of fear for their safety.

Arbitrary arrests and unfair trials

The military use of the courts to crush dissent continued unabated. People were arbitrarily held without charge in interrogation centres. Mass trials took place behind closed doors, with little access to legal assistance,

and there was increased use of harsher laws such as counterterrorism statutes.

A journalist for Dawei Watch media, Myo Myint Oo, was sentenced to life in prison on counterterrorism charges; his colleague Aung San Oo was also convicted and sentenced to 20 years.

Torture and other ill-treatment

The military continued to rely on interrogation centres to forcibly extract information before bringing charges. On 9 October, pro-democracy activists Paing Phyo Min and Shein Wai Aung were arrested and sent to an interrogation centre after raids.⁴

Conditions in detention, including food and medical assistance, remained dire. Guards beat dozens of women arbitrarily detained in Daik-U prison in central Myanmar's Bago region. On 19 August, 50-year-old filmmaker Pe Maung Sein died three days after being released from prison, where injuries sustained during an "interrogation" had not been properly treated for two years. Zaw Myint Maung, the 73-year-old former chief minister of Mandalay under the civilian government ousted in the coup, died in October after nearly four years in prison. He was transferred to Mandalay's General Hospital shortly before he died of leukemia.

Corporate accountability

New shipments of aviation fuel arrived in Myanmar, despite global calls to deprive the country's military of the resources it needed to carry out unlawful air strikes. In January, Amnesty International exposed the military's new evasive tactics for importing aviation fuel throughout 2023, following sanctions imposed on parts of its supply chain.⁵ At least two additional shipments of aviation fuel entered the country between January and June 2024.

Recent shifts in the supply route led to fuel being bought and sold multiple times before reaching Viet Nam ahead of shipment to Myanmar. In two instances, a Chinese-owned oil tanker transported fuel from Viet Nam to Myanmar. A likely third shipment appeared to have come to Myanmar from the United Arab Emirates in May. It was unclear how the fuel was used after it arrived, but the military's control of the port raised significant concerns that it could be used for non-civilian purposes.

In April, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on Myanmar that, for the first time, called on UN member states to refrain from the export, sale or transfer of jet fuel to the Myanmar military. In October, the UK, EU and Canada passed more sanctions that, taken together, targeted

the Myanmar military's access to funds, equipment and material, including aviation fuel.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar also noted with concern a shifting pattern of weapons supplies to Myanmar from the region, with a surge in procurement from Thailand. A significant decrease from Singaporean entities was noted.

Abuses by armed groups

There were mounting allegations of abuses carried out by opposition armed groups. Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar told Amnesty International that the Arakan Army burned down their homes, drove them out, killed civilians and stole their possessions. The Arakan Army denied carrying out abuses during fighting against the military, which carried out an extensive bombing campaign in the Arakan Army's home base of Rakhine State. Rohingya militant groups also stood accused of forcibly recruiting child soldiers. In April, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, which along with the Arakan Army is part of the Three Brotherhood Alliance that launched Operation 1027, carried out extrajudicial executions of its own personnel.

Separately, OHCHR, the UN human rights office, documented killings of civilians by other anti-military groups. In September it reported that in the first half of the year there were 124 reports of killings of administrators, civil servants, military informants and their family members.

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1. ["Myanmar: Military air strikes that killed 17 civilians 'must be investigated as war crimes'", 8 February ↵](#)
 2. ["Myanmar: 'Reckless' shipments of jet fuel continue as air strikes multiply", 8 July ↵](#)
 3. ["Myanmar: New attacks against Rohingya a disturbing echo of 2017 mass violence", 21 August ↵](#)
 4. ["Myanmar: Two activists at grave risk of torture after arrests", 10 October ↵](#)
 5. ["Myanmar: New data suggests military still importing fuel for deadly air strikes despite sanctions", 31 January ↵](#)

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Associated documents

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