



Myanmar Situation Update (10 - 16 January 2022)

This week started with another four-year sentence by the special junta court in Naypyitaw to Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday. The sentence includes two years of imprisonment for the illegal import of walkie talkies under the export import law, one year for the possession of the devices under the telecommunications law and two years for breaching COVID-19 protocols under the natural disaster management law¹. The junta detained Suu Kyi on 1 February 2021 ahead of the coup, claiming to have found illegally imported walkie-talkies in her residence. The junta court also sentenced her to four years in prison in early December 2021 on charges of incitement and breaches of COVID-19 regulations, later reduced to two years, which increases her prison sentences to six years in total so far. Junta courts have also hit her with five fresh corruption charges this week related to the alleged hiring and purchase of a helicopter for former minister Win Myat Aye².

U Khin Maung Oo, junta appointed UEC member said in a press conference that 2,483 elections officials from state/region, district and township levels were charged for their weakness in managing the 2020 elections, and that 2,169 voters were charged for casting more than one ballot³. Myanmar Now has quoted a township UEC sub-committee chairman in Magway region saying he heard that a person who had not been able to reconcile with the junta council had been asked to sign a confession stating that he had "knowingly rigged the election". A township sub-committee chairman in Yangon region also has confirmed that the UEC has instructed them to take action on the grounds of abuse of power⁴. A few days after the coup on 1 February 2021, UEC sub-committee staff, including chairpersons and secretaries, were detained by the junta, with many released later.

¹<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/junta-court-sentences-myanmars-aung-san-suu-kyi-to-another-four-years.html>

²<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-more-charges-helicopter-purchase-junta-2437956>

³ <https://www.popularmyanmar.com/2022/01/14>

⁴ <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/10066>

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's trip to Myanmar has been heavily criticized by the Myanmar people and the international community including some of the ASEAN governments. Malaysia's foreign minister said some Southeast Asian countries had reservations about the visit with concerns that it could be seen as regional recognition of its ruling junta⁵. Some analysts said this shows a deep divide between ASEAN member states under the chairmanship of Cambodia. The ASEAN foreign ministers meetings scheduled for January 2022 have also been postponed by the Cambodian government amid reports of disagreements among the member states over the visit.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said ASEAN should continue to exclude Myanmar's military junta from the group's meetings until it cooperates on an agreed peace plan. Furthermore he said that there was no significant progress in the implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus agreed upon in April 2021 and urged the ASEAN chair to engage all sides of the conflict in Myanmar⁶. Commenting on Myanmar, Philippines foreign minister Teodoro Locsin also said ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is "indispensable" in restoring democracy to the military-ruled country and must be included in any peace talks, regardless of her conviction.⁷ UN special envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer also has urged the Cambodian PM via a virtual call to engage all sides of the crisis in Myanmar⁸.

China and Japan praised the Cambodian PM's Myanmar trip while a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said that China will fully support Cambodia in playing an active role and making an important contribution to properly managing the differences among parties of Myanmar⁹. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi also expressed the positive signs from recent visit to Myanmar, amid efforts to find a breakthrough in the political turmoil in the country¹⁰.

The International Court of Justice is set to start a fresh round of public hearings on the Rohingya genocide case on 21 February in a hybrid court that some participants will join in person while others participate online due to COVID-19 measures. The attorney general of The Gambia revealed the information and the representatives from the junta supposed to challenge to the jurisdiction according to the next court procedure¹¹.

⁵<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/concern-asean-over-cambodia-pms-myanmar-visit-malaysia-minister-says-2022-01-13/>

⁶ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2247579/malaysia-concerned-about-cambodian-leaders-myanmar-trip>

⁷ <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/philippines-aung-suu-kyi-involved-myanmar-peace-process-2439266>

⁸<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-envoy-urges-inclusive-asean-approach-myanmar-crisis>

⁹<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/china-backs-cambodias-much-criticized-diplomatic-bid-in-myanmar>

¹⁰<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/01/3aa71d871535-japan-foreign-minister-praises-cambodian-pms-myanmar-trip-outcome.html>

¹¹<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/aung-san-suu-kyi-replaced-myanmars-representative-feb-hearings-r-ohingya-genocide-2022-01-14/>

The junta launched offensive air strikes and artillery attacks to the capital of Kayah, Loikaw, and continued over the last week so that the media reported over 60,000 of 90,000 residents having fled the city. Clashes between civil resistance forces and junta forces have been reported in Loikaw, Demoso and Hpruso townships in Kayah state. Reports also says that junta attacked the vehicles transporting IDPs from Kayah state to Southern Shan state¹² and prevented trucks carrying food, warm clothes and medicines to Loikaw. Residents in loikaw also have witnessed that junta soldiers looting houses in the Loikaw after residents fled that they even used vehicles to carry the stolen items¹³. The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, said the junta must immediately halt the air and ground attacks, lift the blockade of those seeking to escape and allow access for those seeking to provide aid and shelter¹⁴. In a tweet on 14 January he also urged countries with universal jurisdiction to file criminal complaints by showing the example of a German court's conviction of a Syrian officer for crimes against humanity in Syria.

The junta also continued to attack the KNLA in Myawaddy and Kawkareik townships in Karen state on the Thai border that junta used artillery along with regular airstrikes according to the Karen National Union (KNU)¹⁵. Junta air strikes in the end of December and early January lead thousands of people in Kayin state to flee to the Thai-Myanmar border.

As of 14 January 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,469 people have been killed by the junta. 8,603 people are currently under detention. 80 have been sentenced to death and 1,966 are evading arrest warrants¹⁶.

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¹² <https://ktnews.org/junta-attacks-buses-carrying-loikaw-idps/>

¹³ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/after-residents-flee-fighting-myanmar-soldiers-loot-town.html>

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/RapporteurUn/status/1480241145288572929>

¹⁵ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-airstrikes-continue-near-thai-border.html>

¹⁶ <https://aappb.org/?p=19725>