



Myanmar Situation Update (17 - 23 January 2022)

Five fresh corruption charges were brought by the junta against Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi last week in relation to the alleged hiring and purchase of helicopters for the management of natural disasters and official affairs, which could lead to 75 years of imprisonment as each case can carry a 15-year sentence¹. Aung San Suu Kyi also faces five additional corruption cases in the junta courts. A 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, and another four-year sentence in January 2021 for the illegal import of walkie talkies under the export-import law, possession of the devices under the telecommunications law and breaching COVID-19 protocols under the natural disaster management law².

A junta court also sentenced former NLD parliamentarian Maung Kyaw to death for offenses under the counterterrorism act. Prominent 88 Generation Students Group democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu, known as "Ko Jimmy" was also sentenced to death. He was imprisoned from 1988 to 2005 for his political activities and again from 2007 to 2012³ by the previous junta regimes. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a total of 82 people have been sentenced to death since the coup, either in person or in absentia⁴. Dr. Akar Moe Thu, a professor at Yangon University, was sentenced to three years in prison, while ousted Rakhine State chief minister Nyi Pu was sentenced to nine years in prison for corruption charges⁵.

Rights groups have reported that during the 11 months since the coup there were 7,686 armed clashes and attacks on civilians reported in every administrative area of Myanmar. The violence was comparable to Syria with 7,742, and greater than in Afghanistan (6,481), Yemen (6,270) and

¹<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/suu-kyi-to-face-164-years-imprisonment-as-myanmar-junta-adds-five-more-charges.html>

²<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/junta-court-sentences-myanmars-aung-san-suu-kyi-to-another-four-years.html>

³<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/death-sentences-01212022144508.html>

⁴<https://aappb.org/?p=19806>

⁵<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-jails-rakhine-state-ministers-on-corruption-charges>

Iraq (3,732). The number of attacks has significantly increased in Myanmar in the last four months with the most number of attacks in comparison⁶.

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha said that Thailand will not push back refugees fleeing the violence in Myanmar in a meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer amid criticisms from the international organizations and the civil society. He also has expressed that building trust with the Myanmar leaders would be an important step to pave the way for attempts to end the crisis. The government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana said that refugees would be able to return to Myanmar on a voluntary basis⁷.

National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) said that Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar ambassador to the United Nations, will represent Myanmar at the International Court of Justice⁸. The Court is set to start a new round of public hearings on the Rohingya genocide case from 21-28 February. In December 2019, a delegation led by ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi attended hearings representing Myanmar. After the military coup on 1 February 2021, the junta organized a new legal team led by its foreign minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin to defend the case at the ICJ. Media also reported that junta has been engaging with the court to submit court-ordered reports every six months on the situation of Rohingya⁹.

Three members from the Tanintharyi-based news outlet “Dawei Watch” were arrested by the junta on the same day Dawei Watch reported that more than 60 people had been killed and 900 arrested in Tanintharyi since the coup last year and revealed the difficult conditions facing inmates in Dawei Prison¹⁰. A Chin journalist was also tortured by Myanmar junta forces before being killed along with nine other civilians in Matupi township, Chin State. Chin human rights organization said that more than 30,000 residents of Chin state have now fled to India amid clashes between civil resistance forces and the junta forces¹¹. Over 100 journalists have been arrested by the junta since the coup, and at least 46 are still being held.

Nikkei Asia reported that the Myanmar junta has requested 13 government ministries, the national business body UMFCCI, the national computer association, central bank, financial institutions and telecom operators to submit their feedback by 28 January 2022 on the junta

⁶ <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2051-Accountability-factsheet.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2248895/prayut-no-forced-return-for-myanmar-refugees>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/191574990881009/posts/5168711766500615/>

⁹ <https://www.ucanews.com/news/icj-to-hear-genocide-case-against-myanmar-regime/95791#>

¹⁰ <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/three-staff-members-from-tanintharyi-based-news-outlet-arrested>

¹¹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/clashes-01202022180754.html>

proposed cyber security law¹². The junta first proposed the law in February 2021 few days after the coup and did not proceed further with the condemnation by the human rights groups and the international, local business communities in Myanmar. Drafted legislation also includes a punishment for using a VPN of between one and three years and service providers will need to provide private information including name, address and user history to the authorities upon request. Since the junta social media ban, thousands of people in Myanmar use VPNs to access Facebook and other social media while businesses including financial institutions, tech companies, and international businesses rely on VPNs to access their files safely and communicate safely on the internet.

Energy firms Total and Chevron have announced they will withdraw from Myanmar. In a statement Total said “the situation, in terms of human rights and more generally the rule of law, which have kept worsening in Myanmar since the coup has led to reassess the situation and no longer allows to make a sufficiently positive contribution in the country”. Human rights groups and Myanmar civil society had been advocating since the coup for Total and Chevron to stop their ties with the junta as they pay billions of dollars to the military junta to produce gas from the Yadana field. In a statement, NUG welcomed the decision by Total and Chevron¹³ Total is the biggest shareholder with 31.24%, while Chevron holds 28%. Thailand's PTTEP and Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise funds the Myanmar military hold the rest.

As of 21 January 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,488 people have been killed by the junta. 8,716 people are currently under detention. 82 have been sentenced to death and 1,966 are evading arrest warrants¹⁴.

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¹² <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Myanmar-renews-plans-to-curb-internet-usage-with-VPN-ban>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/237312981905266>

¹⁴ <https://aappb.org/?p=19806>