



Myanmar Situation Update (24 - 30 January 2022)

In the coming week, Myanmar will complete 12 months under the junta regime since the military staged a coup on 1 February 2021 on the allegation of voter fraud in the 2020 Myanmar General Elections undermining the voices of the people that they expressed through the electoral process. Since the coup, the junta regime has killed 1,499 people and detained 11,810, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). From the large number of street protests to brutal junta crackdown and the civil resistance to the NUG's declaration of war on junta, the situation in the country has evolved rapidly that the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security, a local research group, says about 61% of the country is in armed conflict right now while it was only 35% before the coup¹.

Despite the junta continues attacks and arrests, the civil resistance forces and the ethnic armed groups have increased their attacks over the last week. A high number of attacks was once again reported in Yangon region, particularly in Hlaing, Thaketa, Kamayut, Thanlyin, Insein, Mingaladon, Taikkyi, South Dagon, South Okkalapa, Tamwe and Hlaingthaya townships according to the civil resistance groups². Resistance fighters in Chin State also announced that they killed 1,029 junta troops and lost 58 of their own since April 2021³. The reports also revealed that the conflict affected areas in Kayah State including Lowiko, the capital of Kayah where junta forces conducted air raids recently faces food shortages as junta keep block the supply to the state. Around 200,000 people have been displaced in the state due to the fightings⁴.

Free Expression Myanmar, a prominent digital rights group, said the new draft of the Myanmar Cyber Security Act proposed by the junta is worse than the previously proposed one almost a year ago in February 2021. The draft also undermined the standard court procedure as article 66

¹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/independence-01042022210130.html>

² <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/resistance-groups-claim-rising-numbers-of-yangon-attacks-on-myanmar-regime.html>

³ <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/resistance-fighters-in-chin-killed-more-than-1000-junta-troops-last-year>

⁴ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/displaced-kayah-civilians-going-hungry-as-myanmar-junta-blocks-supplies.html>

of the act no longer required the prosecutor to present electronic evidence of a crime in court, but could simply say that the evidence exists. The military also will have the legal authority to check and take over the systems of digital businesses, order content deleted, block digital platforms, revoke business licenses, and seize individuals' computers or phones, all without going to court⁵. The Virtual Private Networks (VPN) are banned with a punishment up to three years imprisonment with a fine of five million Myanmar Kyats (USD 2800) and the use of digital currency can be imprisoned for six months to a year with the same amount of fine used to deter the use of VPN⁶. Currently the people in Myanmar use VPNs to access social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as the junta banned those platforms since the coup. In December last year, the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG), the shadow government approved the use of stablecoin and Tether as the official currency of NUG, potentially making it easier to raise funds and make payments⁷.

Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong said that Myanmar's situation "remains serious" in a joint press conference with the Indonesian President Joko Widodo. He also mentioned that there is still no significant progress on implementing the five-point consensus on Myanmar agreed by the ASEAN and the Myanmar military that includes the call to cease all violence and resume constructive dialogue between all parties. The Indonesian President said Indonesia and Singapore share the same view of the Myanmar situation and a five-point consensus is the decision that ASEAN has taken at the highest level that should be upheld by all⁸. Commenting on the situation in Myanmar and Cambodian Prime Minister's attempts to invite the Myanmar military junta to the ASEAN meetings, Malaysia's Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob also said that Malaysia will not support any attempts to invite political representatives from Myanmar to the ASEAN meetings. 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 Myanmar.

Dawei Watch, a Tanintharyi based regional media in Myanmar said the three of its employees arrested by the junta forces on 18 January 2022 had been released⁹. The journalists and the employees of the media organizations remain vulnerable to arrests and the detentions in Myanmar that 120 have been arrested since the coup, 46 are still detained and 1 died in junta

⁵ <https://mailchi.mp/bb93eacb6749/militarys-cyber-security-bill-worse-than-their-previous-draft>

⁶ https://www.theregister.com/2022/01/24/myanmar_military_junta_bans_vpns_crypto/

⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/12/14/myanmar-shadow-government-approves-crypto-as-official-currency>

⁸ <https://www.todayonline.com/singapore/no-significant-progress-myanmar-towards-asean-consensus-pm-lee-1798961>

⁹ <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/three-arrested-at-myanmar-media-outlet-released-employer>

custody. 16 journalists have been convicted in junta courts and 5 media outlets charged under 505 (a) while 8 media outlets have been banned over the last 12 months¹⁰.

The World Bank announced that Myanmar's economy and people continue to be severely hit by the military coup and the surge in COVID-19 cases in 2021. The World bank estimated an 18 percent decline of the economy in 2021 while the newly released Myanmar Economic Monitor projects growth of 1 percent in the year 2022. The announcement also said the economy remains critically weak, around 30 percent smaller than it might have been in the absence of COVID-19 and the February 2021 coup¹¹.

Joining the Total and Chevron, Australian energy firm Woodside also announced its withdrawal from Myanmar. Company said that it has decided to withdraw from its interests in Myanmar due to the deteriorating human rights situation after nine years of operating in the country¹².

As of 28 January 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,499 people have been killed by the junta. 8,798 people are currently under detention. 84 have been sentenced to death and 1,966 are evading arrest warrants.

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¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/reportingasean/status/1486596908328144897>

¹¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/01/26/economic-activity-in-myanmar-to-remain-at-low-levels-with-the-overall-outlook-bleak>

¹² <https://www.woodside.com.au/docs/default-source/asx-announcements/2022/woodside-to-withdraw-from-myanmar.pdf>