



Myanmar Situation Update (2-29 May 2022)

Myanmar junta filed two more corruption charges against detained State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi while the junta court rejected her appeal against a five-year sentence for corruption handed down in April.¹ The Myanmar military regime so far has filed 20 charges against Aung San Suu Kyi, including 13 corruption charges that each carry up to 15 years in prison. She has been convicted for six charges and handed down 11 years in jail.²

Relatives of Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, meanwhile, filed a complaint before a United Nations (UN) watchdog against her detention following a military takeover last year. Describing the situation as a "judicial kidnapping", human rights lawyers Francois Zimeray and Jessica Finelle said they had filed a complaint on behalf of her relatives with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.³

The junta's anti-corruption commission announced that six people, including former Yangon Region cabinet minister U Han Tun, former Mayor U Maung Maung Soe, former Deputy Mayor and former Secretary of the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), were charged with corruption for allocating land to build fuel stations and causing to lose funds.⁴ The junta also lodged corruption charges against the ousted and detained deputy governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, Dr. Bo Bo Nge, accusing him of failing to tax the donations to Myanmar from the George Soros' Open Society Foundation (OSF), among other charges.⁵ Mandalay's imprisoned chief minister, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung's wife and adult daughter were taken into junta custody after his lawyer was arrested.⁶

At a meeting with the New Mon State Party on 23 May, the junta chief Min Aung Hlaing talked about holding a general election in August 2023 and then transferring power to the winning party. According to the Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD), the party will not discuss elections with the military regime until the end of 2022.⁷

The junta-appointed UEC is in the process of monitoring the membership strength of political parties in Myanmar and their accounts. According to the commission's data, 83 parties have been inspected, and 10 others including the NLD and SNLD have yet to come under scrutiny. There had been controversy between the UEC and SNLD over the choice of venue for scrutiny. The SNLD said that it will not go to the place the UEC chose. During a press conference on 27 April, UEC member

¹ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-court-rejects-suu-kyi-corruption-appeal.html>

² <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-issues-another-corruption-charge-against-suu-kyi.html>

³ <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/05/26/asia-pacific/suu-kyi-family-un-complaint/>

⁴ <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/six-people-including-former-yangon-region-government-officials-charged-with>

⁵ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/junta-accuses-ousted-deputy-governor-of-central-bank-of-myanmar-of>

⁶ <https://www.bignewsnetwork.com/news/272548380/myanmar-junta-arrests-chief-minister-followed-by-his-lawyer>

⁷ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/snld-will-not-discuss-elections-myanmar-junta-till-end-2022>

U Khin Maung Oo said the commission gave time to the political parties in consideration of circumstances although it has the duty and power to allow formation of parties and dissolve them in accordance with the law. He added that the NLD was also given a certain period of time because some of its CEC members were arrested and some went into hiding.⁸

Cambodia's prime minister Hun Sen urged Myanmar's junta leader to allow the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) special envoy Prak Sokhonn to meet with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and former President Win Myint during his next visit to Naypyitaw in June.⁹ He also urged last month the people of Myanmar to follow the junta's effort to invite the country's ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to peace talks, in a bid to persuade them not to ally themselves with resistance forces. The National Unity Government (NUG) and civil society organizations in Myanmar condemned his comments.¹⁰ A three-day ASEAN Defense Senior Officials' Meeting was held from 17 May, where Myanmar junta representatives attended. Cambodia announced its plan to invite the defense minister of the Myanmar junta to the 16th ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting (ADMM) which is scheduled for 21-22 June 2022 in Phnom Penh.¹¹

The head of Myanmar's military government held the first person-to-person peace talks with the country's ethnic minority groups in Naypyitaw. According to the junta spokesperson, Myanmar invited 21 ethnic armed organizations, 10 of which accepted the invitation to the peace talks.¹² The NCA-S EAOs registered to attend the peace talks are Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), New Mon State Party (NMSP), Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), the KNU/KNLA Peace Council, Pa-Oh National Liberation Organization (PNLO) and the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU). In addition, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA-Mongla) and Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP), which have not yet signed the NCA, attended the peace talks, according to the junta spokesman.¹³

NUG's Foreign Minister and head of its Alliance Relations Committee held a video conference for the first time with leaders from Arakan Army (AA) in May 2022 and discussed "the current political situation in Myanmar."¹⁴ NUG's defense chief Yee Mon called on the international community to provide its resistance forces with arms to fight the Myanmar military and requested support similar to what is being given to Ukraine as it fights Russian forces.¹⁵

Eight of ASEAN's leaders attended the US-ASEAN summit in Washington DC without Myanmar. The Philippines declined to attend as it was wrapping up a presidential election then, while Myanmar's junta chief was barred from the summit.¹⁶ The joint statement made no mention of opening informal channels with the NUG as senior U.S. State Department officials and a few

⁸ <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/snld-says-it-will-mull-over-uec-scrutiny-after-party-conference>

⁹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/myanmar-talks-05022022220938.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/hun-sen-slammed-after-scolding-critics-of-myanmar-juntas-peace-bid>

¹¹ <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2022/05/22/normalizing-myanmar-junta-has-asean-self-destructed.html>

¹² <https://apnews.com/article/army-min-aung-hlaing-san-suu-kyi-myanmar-race-and-ethnicity>

¹³ <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/ten-ethnic-armed-groups-accept-the-invitation-of-the-sacs-chairman-for-peace>

¹⁴ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/talks-05162022175552.html>

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<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2311918/myanmar-resistance-urges-west-to-provide-arms-for-fight-against-junta>

¹⁶ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/summit-05122022202901.html>

ASEAN foreign ministers had talks with NUG foreign minister Zin Mar Aung who is also in Washington during the summit.¹⁷ The junta objected to the meeting between Malaysia's foreign minister, Saifuddin Abdullah and NUG's foreign minister Zin Mar Aung on 14 May where they discussed humanitarian aid and establishing a direct relationship between Malaysia and the NUG. According to the junta spokesperson, the junta sent a letter to Malaysia's ministry of foreign affairs warning government and parliament members not to participate in such a meeting again.¹⁸ Several opposition MPs have expressed their support for Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah's proposal for ASEAN to establish an informal engagement with NUG especially when it comes to humanitarian relief.¹⁹

The Indian government may exclude the junta foreign minister at the India-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting set to be hosted by the External Affairs Minister (EAM) in mid-June. India instead decided to follow the consensus of ASEAN countries to invite only a "non-political", "non-military" representative to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and US-ASEAN meetings.²⁰

NUG and its allied organizations have urged the international community not to deliver humanitarian assistance to the Myanmar people via the military regime. The NUG's request was made when UN agencies in Myanmar and ASEAN were holding talks with the junta's Minister for International Cooperation, U Ko Ko Hlaing, on the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Myanmar people.²¹

More than 12,000 people crossed the border from Myanmar into Thailand, arriving in Mae Sot City only in first week of May. They fled violence by the military regime against civilians, which has escalated ever since the coup.²² Over 32,000 refugees have sought refuge in Mizoram since February 2021. Mizoram government has issued identity cards to over 30,000 Myanmar refugees and the process will culminate by May 2022.²³ According to the ISP-Myanmar, almost 200,000 IDPs have been created in Karenni (Kayah) State since the coup. The number is more than half of the people in Karenni State.²⁴

According to the independent research group Data for Myanmar, Myanmar's junta forces had burned down at least 11,417 civilian houses at 296 locations by the end of April with Sagaing Region suffering the heaviest damage with 7503 houses. Nearly 6,300 homes have been burned down in 19 townships in northwestern Sagaing region during the past two months, according to data compiled by RFA.²⁵ There are 10 states and regions where houses have been burned down by regime forces with Sagaing, Magwe, Chin and Kayah suffering the heaviest damage and dozens of others in Mandalay, Tanintharyi, Bago, Kayah and Kachin.²⁶

¹⁷<https://www.voanews.com/a/us-announces-new-plans-on-maritime-cooperation-with-asean-eyeing-china-/6570248.html>

¹⁸<https://www.malaysiasun.com/news/272560520/malaysia-abetting-terrorism-myanmar-reacts-to-a-meeting-in-washington-dc>

¹⁹ <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/620153>

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<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-may-exclude-myanmar-fm-from-asean-fm-meeting-in-june/article65473016.ece>

²¹<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/intl-humanitarian-aid-for-myanmar-shouldnt-be-delivered-via-regime-say-nug>

²² <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/12000-refugees-cross-from-myanmar-into-thailand/>

²³<https://www.northeasttoday.in/2022/05/21/mizoram-more-than-30000-myanmar-refugees-received-identity-cards-process-to-culminate-by-may-2022/>

²⁴ <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/almost-200000-idps-created-karenni-state-coup>

²⁵ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/sagaing-arson-05252022182104.html>

²⁶<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/over-11000-houses-burned-down-in-myanmar-junta-attacks-since-coup.html>

The European Commission is releasing an extra €22 million in humanitarian aid to ensure life-saving support for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh, as well as Rohingya and other conflict-affected people in Myanmar. The funding will address immediate needs, including protection services, food assistance, nutrition, health and shelter.²⁷ According to the Malaysian Foreign Minister, Malaysia needs more funding to assist Myanmar refugees in Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur was looking at providing education and employment opportunities for 200,000 Myanmar refugees and 150,000 refugees in Malaysia.²⁸ NGOs condemned ASEAN's announcement to deliver humanitarian assistance through the junta. Progressive Myanmar, in a joint statement signed by over 700 signatories both inside and outside of Myanmar last week, expressed grave concerns about humanitarian aid being weaponized by the military through ASEAN's proposal.²⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), meanwhile, called on the Quad to focus on rights crises in Asia including Myanmar. HRW said Quad leaders need to move beyond relying on the ASEAN and its failed "five point consensus".³⁰

A pro-junta militia that recently claimed responsibility for the slaying of opposition party members is now openly threatening to kill journalists and their families working for some news outlets that the military regime has dubbed "destructive to the state." The news outlets in Myanmar include The Irrawaddy, Mizzima, Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), The Irrawaddy Times and Khit Thit.³¹ Myanmar has been one of the worst countries for journalists on Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index. After the coup, the junta revoked the licenses of 11 local media outlets and amended existing laws. In Myanmar in 2021, three journalists were killed and seven were tortured. According to reports, 115 journalists were arrested in 2021 and 14 were sentenced.³²

Japanese state-back firm, JX Nippon Oil & Gas Exploration which is part of the ENEOS group will pull out of the Yetagun gas project from Myanmar. Nippon Oil Exploration Myanmar holds a roughly 19.3% stake in natural-gas production at the field. State-run energy firms of Malaysia and Thailand have already announced their withdrawal.³³ In response to the exit of three big Asian firms from a gas field, the junta spokesman claims Russia will soon begin participating in Myanmar's energy industry in place of international companies that quit.³⁴ According to Justice for Myanmar, NGOs have cautiously welcomed the withdrawal of ENEOS from Myanmar but are calling for the responsible disengagement and decommission of the gas project.³⁵

Lebanon's M1 Group transferred control of Telenor Myanmar to the Myanmar military-linked Shwe Byain Phyu conglomerate on 12 May, completing Telenor Group's sale of the mobile network. As a result of the share transfer, Shwe Byain Phyu owns 80% of Telenor Myanmar, where there are over 18 million Telenor users in Myanmar.³⁶

²⁷ <https://tdpelmedia.com/eu-releases-additional-e22-million-in-humanitarian-aid-in-bangladesh-and-myanmar>

²⁸ <https://www.thesundaily.my/local/m-sia-needs-more-funding-to-assist-myanmar-refugees-saifuddin-DB9201959>

²⁹ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/ngos-express-concern-over-plan-deliver-aid-myanmar-junta-directly>

³⁰ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/ngo-calls-quad-meeting-focus-rights-crises-asia-including-myanmar>

³¹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/threats-05022022233600.html>

³² <https://www.mizzima.com/article/myanmar-one-worst-countries-journalists-world-press-freedom-day>

³³ https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20220502_20/

³⁴ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/energy-russia-05062022175253.html>

³⁵ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/ngos-cautiously-welcome-eneos-withdrawal-myanmar>

³⁶ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/military-linked-company-shwe-byain-phyu-takes-control-telenor-myanmar>

The Myanmar regime stopped supplies for internally displaced people (IDPs) taking shelter at displacement camps in Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Rathedaung and other townships in Rakhine State since February while ministry officials told due to the budget constraints. There are nine IDP camps only in Kyauktaw and sheltering over 10,000 people.³⁷

The legislative body of Myanmar's NUG has enacted its People's Police Force Law to regulate law enforcement in areas controlled by resistance forces. Under the law, the People's Police Force will soon be established under the civilian Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration.³⁸ NUG declared that it would start administering 15 townships in Sagaing Region. The 15 townships that have been taken under NUG control are: Katha, Kawlin, Kanbalu,, Bamauk, Kyun Hla, Inndaw, Htee Chaing, Kani, Wetlett, Ayadaw, Myinmu, Taze, Khin U, Tamu and Yinmarbin.³⁹ NUG has been making arrangements for a NUG Pay financial service starting from June.⁴⁰

As of 27 May 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,866 people have been killed by the junta since the coup. There are 10,825 people currently under detention. There are 113 people who have been sentenced to death while 1,979 people are evading arrest warrants.⁴¹

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³⁷ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-regime-stops-supplies-for-displaced-rakhine-villagers.html>

³⁸ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmars-civilian-government-passes-police-law-for-its-controlled>

³⁹ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/all-businesses-sagaings-yinmarbin-township-pay-nug-taxes-or-face-consequences>

⁴⁰ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/spring-revolution-daily-news-26-may-2022>

⁴¹ <https://aappb.org/?p=21636>