



Myanmar Situation Update (6-12 June 2022)

A junta court in Myanmar ruled that prosecutors presented sufficient evidence against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Australian economist Sean Turnell and three former cabinet members to continue the trial on charges of violating the Official Secrets Law. In the coming weeks, the court will hear the defense arguments, including a re-examination of the prosecution's witnesses. Meanwhile, a legal official said Turnell, who is detained at a prison in Naypyidaw, appeared to be in good health.¹

Junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) member Khin Maung Oo said the military junta considers that the country is under a pre-election period as the junta-appointed UEC is preparing to hold elections in August 2023. The junta-run UEC is currently updating voter lists, recruiting and building the capacity of UEC staff, collecting the materials, and preparing or constructing the offices across the country. He also said that the next election will be held according to the proportional representation (PR) system. He said the UEC will share information about the PR system on television and through pamphlets as educational materials² once confirmed. The chairman of the junta-appointed UEC met Honorary Professor Cardinal Jackson of Southeast Asian Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Naypyitaw on 11 June where he said that the next election will be conducted according to the PR system and that local and foreign elections observers will be invited to the elections³.

A top US government official, however, said there was "no chance" the Myanmar junta's planned elections in August 2023 would be free and fair.⁴

Myanmar's junta used the identity documents to carry out attacks against the ethnic Rohingya community, much like the perpetrators of the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide, according to a new report which called on the United Nations (UN) Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁵ Following the genocide committed on Rohingyas, Myanmar junta troops torched hundreds of houses during a three-day raid in Sagaing, in northern part of Myanmar.⁶ The junta sent troops to villages in the war-torn Sagaing region where the armed

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/sean-turnell-s-trial-to-proceed-rules-myanmar-court-20220610-p5asr2.html>

² <https://www.popularmyanmar.com/2022/06/06/%E1%80%9C%E1%80%80%E1%80%BA%E1%80%9B%E1%80%BE%E1%80%AD%E1%80%80%E1%80%AC%E1%80%9C%E1%80%80%E1%80%AD%E1%80%AF%E1%80%9B%E1%80%BD%E1%80%B1%E1%80%B8%E1%80%80%E1%80%B1%E1%80%AC%E1%80%80%E1%80%BA%E1%80%95/?fs=e&s=c>

³ <https://news-eleven.com/article/232263?>

⁴ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220611-no-chance-myanmar-polls-will-be-free-and-fair-us-official>

⁵ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/documents-06072022230004.html>

⁶ <https://www.weeklyblitz.net/oped/myanmar-junta-begins-fresh-genocide-on-innocent-civilians/>

resistance is strong and forcibly recruited residents into pro-junta militias. Troops offered residents cash to join and train with the pro-junta Pyu Saw Htee militia and threatened to burn down their villages if they didn't comply.⁷ The National Unity Government's (NUG) Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration said that the military junta had committed 2,778 war crimes in the last six months.⁸

The Prisons Department spokesman said in a news report that the junta has not issued execution orders for a former lawmaker from the ousted government and a prominent democracy activist sitting on death row after convictions on terrorism charges. They are in good health and have been transferred to death row where they are wearing orange prison suits given to those facing execution.⁹

Two of Myanmar's most notorious detention centers carried out brutal crackdowns on political prisoners over the past week, signaling the junta's determination to impose harsh penalties on detained dissidents. Two political prisoners from Mandalay's Obo Prison were beaten to death while 13 others were injured during a clash. A day later, at least two political detainees were shot and another 60 were injured after prison authorities moved to crush a protest at Hpa-An Prison in Kayin.¹⁰

Nearly 100,000 internally displaced ethnic Chins in western Myanmar called for help from civil society groups to avoid allowing the military junta to control distribution of humanitarian aid from Southeast Asian countries, saying their strife-torn region is not receiving assistance.¹¹

According to the Media Monitor Collective, the junta armed forces burned nearly 20,000 houses all over the country and displaced over 1.2 million people within 15 months of the military coup.¹² The junta confiscated nearly 600 homes and other buildings owned by people it claims are members or supporters of NUG, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Committee of Representatives (CRPH) and anti-junta People's Defense Force (PDF) paramilitary group between the February 2021 and 20 May 2022, according to a report by independent research group the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP Myanmar).¹³

By 2022, the political and economic disorder in Myanmar drove almost half of the population, around 25 million individuals, into poverty. At least 425,000 people were newly displaced since the coup, bringing the number to one million in 2022 yet humanitarian access decelerated as the military tries to subdue an armed resistance movement.¹⁴

The United Nations condemned the fatal shooting of a World Health Organization (WHO)

⁷ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/recruits-06062022194237.html>

⁸ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/spring-revolution-daily-news-12-june-2022>

⁹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/death-row-06102022172452.html>

¹⁰ <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/political-prisoners-shot-beaten-to-death-in-mandalay-hpa-an-crackdowns>

¹¹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/chin-state-06072022150541.html>

¹² <https://www.mizzima.com/article/spring-revolution-daily-news-7-june-2022>

¹³ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/confiscations-06082022172537.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-myanmar-crisis-escalating-humanitarian-emergencies/>

employee in eastern Myanmar, the latest in a string of assassinations underlining the chaos in the country since last year's coup.¹⁵

With the risk of arrest or injury high for those reporting on the Myanmar junta, many journalists fled to borderlands or neighboring countries. Despite the risks that reporting on life in Myanmar brings, reporters continue to cover the conflict, both from within and outside the country. The regional group Reporting ASEAN, however, documented over 120 arrests of journalists since the military seized power in February 2021. Of those cases, at least 48 are still in custody.¹⁶

The International Publishers Association (IPA) and PEN America, in their communiqué issued on 7 June 2022, condemned the action against publishing house Lwin Oo Sarpay. "Two other publishing houses have been closed down in recent weeks including Shwe Lat and Yan Aung Sarpay and the Win To Aung printing press that were also publishing books on sensitive themes, including LGBTQ+ content." According to the chair of the IPA's Freedom to Publish Committee, "cracking down on these publishers is designed to sow fear and encourage self-censorship".¹⁷

A wave of internet shutdowns, censorship and social media blocks marked the aftermath of the military coup. As often happens in these cases, people turned to the best VPN services to circumvent web restrictions. By the end of 4 February, VPN demand increased a staggering 7,200% and the number is only growing. The military junta released the draft of its infamous Cybersecurity Law, seeking to punish people using VPNs with up to 3-year prison sentences.¹⁸

Myanmar's military government on 6 June 2022 expressed its "utmost indignation" at a French diplomatic snub describing it as an illegitimate government, warning it could have negative impacts on the existing bilateral relations.¹⁹

The NUG announced it set up its own police force, in its latest effort to hamper the junta's efforts to govern after the coup last year. The NUG said it was ready to take responsibility for domestic law enforcement with a police force accepted by the people. Its purpose was "to take lawful action against the terrorist military council for committing human rights violations, war crimes and terrorism acts against the people," the NUG said in a statement.²⁰ The NUG's Minister of Human Rights Aung Myo Min urged the Czech Republic's Deputy Foreign Minister to focus on the growing human rights abuses in Myanmar at the upcoming UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.²¹ According to NUG, there was a meeting between the NUG minister of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish Foreign Minister discussing Myanmar affairs.²²

The junta announced that it will accept and welcome armed resistance organizations' members

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-calls-justice-after-fatal-shooting-myanmar-who-worker-2022-06-09/>

¹⁶ <https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-s-junta-block-or-censor-everything-journalists-say-/6609707.html>

¹⁷ <https://publishingperspectives.com/2022/06/ipa-and-pen-america-blast-myanmars-shutdown-of-a-publishing-house/>

¹⁸ <https://www.techradar.com/features/myanmars-digital-dictatorship-aims-to-criminalize-vpns>

¹⁹ <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-military-government-slams-france-over-illegitimate-snub-threatens-ties>

²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-shadow-government-create-its-own-police-force-2022-06-07/>

²¹ <https://www.mizzima.com/article/nug-minister-says-rights-abuses-getting-worse-myanmar>

²² <https://www.mizzima.com/article/spring-revolution-daily-news-10-june-2022>

including PDF (People's Defense Force) if they are to enter the legal fold by surrendering their weapons and participate in future work plans of the country.²³

US Department of State Counselor Derek Chollet is scheduled to visit Thailand, Singapore and Brunei from 7-14 June 2022 for talks to boost efforts to pressure the military government of Myanmar to restore democracy, the Department of State announced.²⁴

ASEAN special envoy, Cambodia Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, will make his second trip to Myanmar, on 29-30 June, to follow up on the implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus.²⁵

ASEAN chair, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen, called on Myanmar's junta leader to reconsider plans to execute members of opposition groups. He said the execution would cause a widespread negative reaction from the international community. It will also have serious impacts on the efforts made by ASEAN.²⁶

Sri Lanka strengthened diplomatic ties with Myanmar's junta despite international condemnation as counties around the world continue to condemn the regime for its human rights abuses.²⁷

Fifty-nine Rohingya people were discovered on a Thai island, who were abandoned by traffickers en route to Malaysia over Thailand's seas. Their boat was among three vessels carrying 178 people that had left Myanmar and Bangladesh. The first two boats carrying 119 people were stopped and arrested by Malaysian authorities, according to the Thai police statement.²⁸

As of 10 June 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,929 people have been killed by the junta since the coup. There are 11,004 people currently under detention. There are 114 people who have been sentenced to death while 1,979 people are evading arrest warrants.²⁹

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²³ <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/sac-announces-welcome-to-armed-resistance-organizations-including-pdf-if-they-want-to>

²⁴ <https://www.state.gov/counselor-chollets-travel-to-thailand-singapore-and-brunei/>

²⁵ <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/asean-special-envoy-to-visit-myanmar-later-this-month/>

²⁶ <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-politics/asean-chair-myanmars-sac-refrain-death-penalty-use>

²⁷ <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lanka-strengthens-diplomatic-ties-myanmars-junta-despite-international-condemnation>

²⁸ <https://en.prothomalo.com/international/asia/thai-police-rescue-59-rohingyas-abandoned-on-island>

²⁹ <https://aappb.org/?p=21786>