

**BURMA COUP WATCH FOR MONTH OF MARCH 2021:  
 JUNTA LAUNCHES MILITARY OFFENSIVE ON DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN  
 DESPERATE BID FOR CONTROL**

- The junta, still unable to gain political, territorial or economic control in the second month of its power grab, has escalated military offensives on both the democracy movement and border-based ethnic communities.
- Security forces have unleashed lethal battlefield tactics and weapons on civilians throughout the country, killing scores in the towns and cities of Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Kachin, Mandalay, Mon, Sagaing, Shan, Thanitharyi, and Yangon States and Regions.
- The junta has launched airstrikes on Kachin and Karen states, in apparent retaliation for opposition to the coup.
- The junta has already killed at least 536 civilians, injured hundreds more, and detained at least 2,729 politicians, activists, journalists and others, in attacks against the democracy movement. It has also killed at least 23 and displaced over 20,000 in attacks on ethnic communities.
  - During March alone, the junta killed at least 513, and displaced over 18,000.
- Despite being threatened with the death penalty for “treason,” the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) (i.e., representing the national parliament) abolished the military-drafted 2008 Constitution, paving the way for the establishment of a national unity government with ethnic organizations.
- In order to avert worse violence and create space for dialogue and negotiations, the movement in Burma and allies urge that:
  - Foreign states and bodies enact targeted sanctions on the military (Tatmadaw), Tatmadaw-affiliated companies and partners, including a global arms embargo;
  - All International Financial Institutions (IFIs) immediately freeze existing loans, recall prior loans and reassess the post-coup situation; and
  - The UN Security Council immediately send a delegation to prevent further violence and ensure the situation is peacefully resolved.
- The Tatmadaw has sought to weaken popular opposition by reintroducing the death penalty, and enforcing a string of oppressive legal amendments and orders that violate human rights of anybody the junta perceives as an enemy. It enumerated 23 laws or causes of action that would subject civilians to prosecution by court-martial.
- Millions of civilians continue to protest nationwide—in almost every township in Burma—despite military intimidation and brutal violence.

**CONTENTS**

2 Coup timeline  
 2 Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw  
 3 Nationwide peaceful protest  
 3 Illegal junta’s violent crackdown  
 4 Junta “apologizes” and then ramps up violence  
 6 Attacks on ethnic communities  
 7 Desperate junta orders  
 8 International condemnation and sanctions  
 10 Corporations pull back  
 10 Coup destabilizes economy

## Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)

On 5 March, the military junta declared that members of the CRPH and local CRPH administrative bodies could face death or lengthy prison terms for treason. It warned that anybody who communicated with the CRPH could face up to seven years in prison for committing incitement and intimidation to civil service personnel.<sup>3</sup>

These threats did not deter the CRPH or impact on popular support for it. During March, the CRPH continued its work. It appointed cabinet ministers, including that of Mahn Win Khaing Than as acting Vice-President. It revoked repressive laws, declared a tax moratorium, and urged foreign oil and gas companies not to pay taxes or dividends to the illegal junta.

The CRPH also formed a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) Support Team, to support striking civil servants, their needs, and their right to strike.<sup>4</sup>

On 5 March, the CRPH announced that it had filed a case with the Union Attorney General, accusing the junta of treason over its illegal power grab, under Penal Code Sections 122(1) and 124a.<sup>5</sup> For further background information on the CRPH, see [ALTSEAN-Burma \(31 Mar 2021\) Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw: Burma/Myanmar's legitimate government until parliament resumes.](#)

On 31 March, CRPH—representing 76% of the 498 democratically-elected members of Burma's parliament—declared the abolition of the military-drafted 2008 Constitution, paving the way for the formation of a unity government with ethnic organizations.<sup>6</sup>

The same day, the CRPH declared establishment of the Federal Democracy Charter, which provides a political roadmap to building a federal democratic union, including drafting of a new constitution with input from a wide array of actors. The Charter vows to do away with dictatorship, enshrines the rights of minorities, and announces the intent to form an interim national unity government with CRPH members and “individuals nominated by ethnic armed revolutionary organizations, individuals, academics and experts.”<sup>7</sup>

## March Timeline:

- 1 Mar:** One month into the coup, security forces have killed 30 and detained 1,213 in their crackdown on the democracy movement. They killed 16 and displaced over 1,900 in attacks on border-based communities.
- 9 Mar:** Security forces raid Myanmar Now's office, after banning it and four other news agencies.
- 15 Mar:** Cellular network data is cut, leaving only fixed-line (wifi) internet connectivity.<sup>1</sup>  
Tatmadaw imposes martial law in six Yangon townships.
- 24 Mar:** Karen National Union announces it is sheltering hundreds of urban protesters and MPs.
- 27 Mar:** Myanmar Armed Forces Day. Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing says the military will protect people of Burma and democracy. Security forces kill at least 114 protesters, including a man they burned alive, in the bloodiest day yet.
- 27–28 Mar:** Tatmadaw forces conduct air strikes in Karen State for the first time this millennium, killing three villagers and displacing over 10,000, including over 3,000 who fled to Thailand.
- 31 Mar:** Two months into the coup, security forces have killed 536 and detained 2,729 in their crackdown on the democracy movement. They killed 23 and displaced over 20,000 in attacks on border-based communities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Netblocks (updated 24 Mar 2021) Internet disrupted in Myanmar amid apparent military uprising

<sup>2</sup> Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) (31 Mar 2021) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (updated 31 Mar 2021) Data Export Tool, available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

<sup>3</sup> State Administration Council (SAC) (5 Mar 2021) Announcement for CRPH that commits high treason and its organizations

<sup>4</sup> Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) (6 Mar 2021) Informing the public; CRPH (7 Mar 2021) Announcement 11/2021

<sup>5</sup> CRPH (9 Mar 2021) News Release #9

<sup>6</sup> CRPH (31 Mar 2021) Statement 20/2021: Declaration abolishing the 2008 Constitution

<sup>7</sup> CRPH (31 Mar 2021) Statement 19/2021: Declaration of a Federal Democracy Charter; Poppy McPherson (via Twitter) (1 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/poppymcp/status/1377315726986334213>

The declaration is an important step in the CRPH's commitment to work with all ethnic people toward the common goal of a genuine democratic, federal system.<sup>8</sup> It opens the path to a stronger partnership with ethnic and other marginalized groups not allowed to participate or be represented in elections.

Meanwhile, international support for the CRPH has grown. On 3 March, the German Bundestag sent a letter to the CRPH and the speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, acknowledging them.<sup>9</sup> On 5 March, European parliamentarians met with the CRPH, and days later said they are "committed to supporting the CRPH's ongoing work [...] and to lending them support in every way it is possible for us."<sup>10</sup> On 25 March, 24 MPs from 12 countries formed the International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar (IPAM), to support fellow lawmakers from Burma, including CRPH members, promote democracy, and ensure accountability.<sup>11</sup>

Indonesia has had "intensive communication" with both the CRPH and the junta.<sup>12</sup> Canada's special envoy to Burma has been in contact with the CRPH and "believes that the organisation is the closest body to an elected, representative government in Myanmar today."<sup>13</sup>

### **Nationwide peaceful protest**

Millions of people have protested the coup, in nearly every township of the country—in many places, every day. The Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) was initiated on 2 February by medical workers and other civil servants who refused to work for the junta, now includes bank employees, teachers, some police, unions and private sector workers, and has been involved in protests in 310 of 330 townships (in all States/Regions).<sup>14</sup> The General Strike Committee was also formed in February, from 25 groups including political parties, ethnic minority groups, and religious groups.<sup>15</sup> These groups, along with General Strike Committee of Nationalities and unaffiliated protesters, continued to assert their anti-junta stance in the streets and to bear the junta's violence in return.

In March, hundreds of employees at Tatmadaw-owned factories making vehicle parts went on strike.<sup>16</sup> The junta fired 120 Ministry of Information staff who refused to work, joining the CDM.<sup>17</sup>

The CDM has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, as "an exemplary peaceful response to the power grab by Myanmar's army."<sup>18</sup>

### **Illegal junta's violent crackdown**

In March, the junta unleashed lethal violence on civilians throughout the country, killings scores in the towns and cities of Ayerwaddy, Bago, Kachin, Mandalay, Mon, Sagaing, Shan, Thanitharyi, and Yangon States and Regions. In Yangon, the poorer, working class townships of Hlaingthaya, Shwepyitha, South Dagon and North Okkalapa seemed to be targeted for the harshest attacks. On 24 March, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that approximately 100,000 migrants had fled Hlaingthaya to their communities of origin, mainly Rakhine State and Ayeyarwady Region, in search of safety and security.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CRPH (5 Mar 2021) CRPH (Union Parliament) Political Visions

<sup>9</sup> German Foreign Office (via Twitter) (3 Mar 2021) <https://twitter.com/GermanyDiplo/status/1367067696458825734>

<sup>10</sup> European Parliament (9 Mar 2021) Leading MEPs on latest developments in Myanmar, 9 March 2021

<sup>11</sup> Asian Parliamentarians for human rights (25 Mar 2021) Global MPs form International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia (24 Feb 2021) Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia - Press Briefing on the Outcome of the Visit to Bangkok

<sup>13</sup> Southeast Asia Globe (12 Mar 2021) Vying for legitimacy as Myanmar's recognised government, who are the CRPH?

<sup>14</sup> The Irrawaddy (2 Feb 2021) Myanmar Medics Prepare Civil Disobedience Against Military Rule; Civil Disobedience Myanmar (visited 27 Mar 2021) Home

<sup>15</sup> Eleven Media Group (21 Feb 2021) A General Strike Committee formed, made up of student leaders and political parties

<sup>16</sup> Myanmar Now (30 Mar 2021) Hundreds of workers go on strike at Ministry of Defence factories making Myanmar military vehicle parts

<sup>17</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Sacks 120 Striking Staff from State-Run Broadcast Service

<sup>18</sup> Frontier Myanmar (27 Mar 2021) CDM nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

<sup>19</sup> UN (24 Mar 2021) Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

In February, the junta deployed live ammunition, tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets against civilians,<sup>20</sup> but in March, is escalated to deployment of lethal battlefield tactics and weapons, including the use of light and sub-machine guns, sniper rifles, and semi-automatic rifles.<sup>21</sup>

On 15 March, in Hlaingthaya Township, security forces killed six people, including a man collecting trash and two women killed when bullets were fired into their homes; in Dawbon Township, security forces attacked protestors at a vigil for murdered protestors, killing two and injuring others; and in Mandalay, security forces killed at least six people, including three children, and injured at least 17 others.<sup>22</sup> On 23 March, they kicked in the door to a Mandalay home, where they shot and killed a seven-year old girl as she ran to her father, and abducted her 19-year old brother.<sup>23</sup>

### **Junta “apologizes” then unleashes worse violence**

On 23 March, in an uncharacteristic expression of regret, junta (and Tatmadaw) spokesperson Brigadier-General Zaw Min Tun said he was sad over the killing of 164 “violent terrorists” because they were “our nationals”—in an apparent bid to appease the international community and stave off pressure.<sup>24</sup> On 24 March, this was followed up with the release of 628 young prisoners arbitrarily detained for several weeks in Insein prison.<sup>25</sup>

However, the junta quickly changed its tune on 27 March—Armed Forces Day—to showcase support from 8 countries, and launch parallel offensives against civilians in urban and ethnic border areas. As the Deputy Defence Minister of Russia and representatives from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam attended celebrations and a gala in Naypyidaw,<sup>26</sup> security forces killed at least 114 protesters—including a man they burned alive—in their most brutal day yet.<sup>27</sup> A day after Thailand attended the military festivities, the junta launched airstrikes on Karen communities along the Thai-Burmese border (see *Attacks on ethnic communities and EAOs*).

On 26 March, the eve of Armed Forces Day, the junta publicly owned its deadly tactics, warning civilians via state-run television: “you could be in danger of getting shot in the head and the back.”<sup>28</sup>

The junta followed through on this threat, further dramatically escalating violence nationwide in the last days of March. On 27 March, they killed 114 people, including 11 children.<sup>29</sup>

- On 27 March, in Lashio (Shan State), they fatally shot three protesters.<sup>30</sup>
- On 27 March, in Hopin (Kachin State), they fatally shot a bystander at a protest.<sup>31</sup>
- On 27 March, in Daik-U (Bago Region), they fatally shot two men.<sup>32</sup>
- On 27 March, in Kyaikhto (Mon State), they fatally shot a protester in the head.<sup>33</sup>
- On 28 March, in Kalay (Sagaing Region), they fatally shot feminist activist Ah Ku, Director of Women for Justice.<sup>34</sup>
- On 28 March, in Monywa (Sagaing Region), they fatally shot in the head Thinzar Hein, a nursing student, while she was working in a first aid team.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> ALTSEAN-Burma (Feb 2021) confidential field interviews 2101, 2103, 2104

<sup>21</sup> Amnesty International (11 Mar 2021) Myanmar: vast arsenal and notorious troops deployed nationwide ‘killing spree’ protest crackdown - new research

<sup>22</sup> Myanmar Now (17 Mar 2021) Death toll from Monday’s violence climbs to at least 20

<sup>23</sup> NBC News (26 Mar 2021) Myanmar coup: 7-year-old died in her father’s arms after being shot by security forces

<sup>24</sup> SAC (24 Mar 2021) Information Team of State Administration Council meets media at 3/2021 press conference; Reuters (23 Mar 2021) Myanmar military spokesman “sorry” for loss of lives of protesters; Bangkok Post (23 Mar 2021) Myanmar junta ‘sad’ at protest deaths but vows to stop ‘anarchy’

<sup>25</sup> AAPP (24 Mar 2021) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup

<sup>26</sup> Nikkei Asia (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar junta holds military parade with Russian attendance

<sup>27</sup> Myanmar Now (28 Feb 2021) ‘Help me, Mother’ – Mandalay resident shot and burnt alive by junta’s troops

<sup>28</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Unwittingly Acknowledges ‘Shoot-to-Kill’ Policy Against Protesters

<sup>29</sup> The Irrawaddy (29 Mar 2021) About a Dozen Children Killed by Myanmar Regime Over Bloody Weekend

<sup>30</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Kills 23 More Protesters as It Marks Armed Forces Day

<sup>31</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Kills 23 More Protesters as It Marks Armed Forces Day

<sup>32</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Kills 23 More Protesters as It Marks Armed Forces Day

<sup>33</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Kills 23 More Protesters as It Marks Armed Forces Day

<sup>34</sup> CNN (28 Mar 2021) UN officials condemn Myanmar junta after 100-plus civilians killed in one day

<sup>35</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Remembering Myanmar’s Fallen Heroes

- On 29 March, in Dawei (Tanintharyi Region), they shot and dragged a 17-year-old boy, who died the next day.<sup>36</sup>
- On 29 March, in Myingyan (Mandalay Region), they fatally shot three men.<sup>37</sup>
- On 29 March, in Patheingyi (Ayeyarwaddy Region), they fatally shot two protesters, including a 15-year-old boy.<sup>38</sup>
- On 30 March, they killed five protesters in Myittha (Kachin State), Muse (Shan State), and Kawthaung (Tanintharyi Region).<sup>39</sup>

As of 31 March, the junta had killed at least 536 civilians including children, injured thousands more, and detained at least 2,729 politicians, activists, journalists, and others.<sup>40</sup> They have ignored international standards related to the policing of assemblies and routinely used unnecessary, disproportionate, and, in many cases, lethal force against peaceful protesters. They have employed notorious military units involved in mass atrocity crimes against the Rohingya and other communities.

**Security forces have targeted civil society** for their role in protests. They have flouted due process standards by taking people from their homes without evidence, sending them to jail without proper legal proceedings, and refusing to let the detainees see lawyers. On 15 March, the junta seized Open Society Foundation’s Myanmar bank accounts and issued arrest warrants for 11 staff members.<sup>41</sup> On 21 March, security forces raided the offices of We Love Yangon association, where it was keeping medical supplies for CDM members.<sup>42</sup> Nationwide violence, along with the Tatmadaw’s history of human rights violations, has instilled terror among civil society members, forcing them to move from house to house and even township to township, to avoid being detained.<sup>43</sup>

**Security forces have targeted health workers**—among the first to join CDM—in violation of Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law.<sup>44</sup> On 3 March, in North Okkalapa Township (Yangon), security forces viciously beat four volunteers from a Mon Myat Seik Htar Elderly Care Charity vehicle—one of whom died of serious injuries—while holding guns to their heads.<sup>45</sup> On 5 March, security forces stormed the Tachileik District People’s Hospital through the front door and raided every room in the hospital.<sup>46</sup> On 6 March, security forces fired tear gas into the ward near the North Okkalapa Hospital (Yangon); Tatmadaw Battalion 77 set up a base in May Darwe hospital in North Okkalapa Township; and the night before, three people including Dr. Hein Htet Soe from Insein hospital were detained for participation in CDM, along with local community guards from several quarters in Yangon.<sup>47</sup> The junta has also withheld medical treatment from those with health conditions in detention, such as Win Htein, an 82-year-old NLD member who suffers from high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart and thyroid diseases.<sup>48</sup>

**Security forces have targeted striking workers and labor unions**, which form a pillar of peaceful protests. They have committed acts of violence and intimidation against CDM members and protestors, with pro-military counter protesters and gangs of hired thugs attempting to break strikes.<sup>49</sup> On 11 March, security forces surrounded Myanmar Railways employee housing in Yangon, trapping hundreds and causing hundreds of others to flee.<sup>50</sup> The State Administration Council (SAC) has declared martial law

<sup>36</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Fifteen More Killed as Myanmar Regime Continues Bloodbath

<sup>37</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Fifteen More Killed as Myanmar Regime Continues Bloodbath

<sup>38</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Fifteen More Killed as Myanmar Regime Continues Bloodbath

<sup>39</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Mar 2021) Fifteen More Killed as Myanmar Regime Continues Bloodbath

<sup>40</sup> AAPP (31 Mar 2021) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup

<sup>41</sup> The Irrawaddy (16 Mar 2021) Myanmar Regime Seizes Bank Accounts of Soros’ Open Society Foundation

<sup>42</sup> Myanmar Now (21 Mar 2021) Woman falls from Yangon apartment under questionable circumstances during military raid

<sup>43</sup> ALTSEAN-Burma (Feb 2021) confidential field interviews 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104; see also The Irrawaddy (26 Feb 2021)

Myanmar Regime Hunts Down Labor Activists Despite International Condemnation

<sup>44</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (visited 9 Mar 2021) IHL Database, Customary IHL, Rule 25. Medical Personnel; Rule 26. Medical Activities

<sup>45</sup> AAPP (3 Mar 2021) 3 March 2021 Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup

<sup>46</sup> AAPP (5 Mar 2021) 5 March 2021 Daily Briefing, Detention and Fatality Lists in Relation to Military Coup

<sup>47</sup> AAPP (6 Mar 2021) 6 March 2021 Daily Briefing, Detention and Fatality Lists in Relation to Military Coup

<sup>48</sup> AAPP (5 Mar 2021) 5 March 2021 Daily Briefing, Detention and Fatality Lists in Relation to Military Coup

<sup>49</sup> 177 Myanmar Civil Society Organizations (12 Feb 2021) An open letter from Myanmar civil society organizations to the UN Security Council

<sup>50</sup> Myanmar Now (11 Mar 2021) Railway workers flee as security forces take control of housing compound

in industrial zones, issued a list of union leaders to target, and asked factory owners to disclose names and addresses of union leaders.<sup>51</sup>

**Security forces have targeted journalists** for their efforts to report on the current crisis. On 9 March, security forces raided the office of independent media outlet Myanmar Now, the day after the junta revoked its license.<sup>52</sup> On 11 March, security forces arrested Polish photojournalist Robert Bociaga, who was photographing demonstrations in Shan State.<sup>53</sup> On 19 March, in Naypyidaw, security forces arrested BBC journalist Aung Thura and former Mizzima journalist Than Htike Aung.<sup>54</sup>

### **Attacks on ethnic communities and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs)**

The Tatmadaw continued its decades-long offensive against ethnic minority groups. During March, it was involved in around 70 armed clashes with ethnic EAOs or attacks on civilians.<sup>55</sup> While these attacks are considered to be linked to conflict pre-dating the coup, the Tatmadaw appears to have escalated attacks in an attempt to drive a wedge between the EAOs and the democracy movement. Colonel Naw Bu of the Kachin Independence Army observed, “[a]t the same time people are protesting against the military regime in every town in Burma, offensives have been launched (against EAOs) in the jungle.”<sup>56</sup>

The Tatmadaw made overtures to EAOs in the face of massive ethnic resistance to the coup, but has found little support. While the powerful United Wa State Party has remained silent, the 10 EAO signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), as well as the Kachin Independence Organization and United League of Arakan, have expressly condemned the coup.<sup>57</sup> The “brotherhood alliance” of Ta’ang National Liberation Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Arakan Army said they will join the resistance if the military does not stop its violent crackdown.<sup>58</sup>

Since 1 February, Tatmadaw forces have clashed heavily with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in the southeast and northeast of the country, respectively. Other clashes have taken place with the Shan State Army-South and Ta’ang National Liberation Army.<sup>59</sup> The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has launched offensives against multiple Tatmadaw positions across six townships and captured key strategic positions in Momauk, near the Chinese border, and in the jade-mining hub of Hpakant.<sup>60</sup> The KIA’s stated reason for the offensive, which is occurring in areas relatively peaceful since fighting in 2018, is to relieve pressure on the CDM and other protesters, and punish the junta for killing peaceful protesters.<sup>61</sup>

Since 1 February in Karen State, a Tatmadaw offensive against local villages has forced around 8,000 people to flee into the jungle.<sup>62</sup> An additional several hundred people associated with the NLD or CDM are now sheltering in Karen National Union (KNU) areas, with up to 7,000 expected to arrive by the end of April.<sup>63</sup>

On 27 March, the KNLA seized control of a Tatmadaw base in Hpapun Township, Karen State. That day and the following morning, the Tatmadaw conducted air strikes in Hpapun district, including on

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<sup>51</sup> Labor Notes (19 Mar 2021) Military Targets Workers as Repression Escalates in Myanmar

<sup>52</sup> The Guardian (9 Mar 2021) Myanmar: second NLD official dies in custody as junta cracks down on media

<sup>53</sup> SHAN News (14 Mar 2021) Security Forces Arrest Foreign Photojournalist in Taunggyi

<sup>54</sup> Myanmar Now (19 Mar 2021) Junta arrests two more journalists in Naypyitaw

<sup>55</sup> Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (updated 31 Mar 2021) Data Export Tool, available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

<sup>56</sup> Network Media Group (23 Feb 2021) Burma Army Attack KIO/A in Muse District

<sup>57</sup> Peace Process Steering Team (2 Feb 2021) The statement of Special Meeting of the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST); Kachin Independence Organization, Central Committee (17 Feb 2021) Statement; Khine Thu Ka, quoted in Reuters (23 Mar 2021) Rebel militia in Myanmar’s Rakhine State joins other minorities in condemning junta. The NCA signatories are (All Burma Students Democratic Front, Arakan Liberation Party, Chin National Front, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army-Brigade 5, Karen National Union, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, Lahu Democratic Union, New Mon State Party, Pa-O National Liberation Army, and Restoration Council of Shan State).

<sup>58</sup> Myanmar Now (30 Mar 2021) Brotherhood Alliance tells military to stop killings, threatens to abandon ceasefire

<sup>59</sup> Shan Herald (15 March 2021) Nearly 100 people seek refuge from military regime in RCSS territory; Shwe Phee Myay News Agency, via Facebook (22 Mar 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/shwepheemyaynews/posts/918780285604770> (Burmese)

<sup>60</sup> The 74 Media, via Twitter (25 Mar 2021) <https://twitter.com/The74Media2019/status/1374908765502234625>; Kachinland News (16 Mar 2021) About 200 villagers fled as battles rage near Myitsone

<sup>61</sup> Kachin Independence Organization, Central Committee (17 Feb 2021) Statement

<sup>62</sup> Deutsche Welle (22 Mar 2021) Myanmar military forces ethnic Karen into jungle

<sup>63</sup> Frontier Myanmar (25 Mar 2021) Myanmar’s rebel areas brace for thousands fleeing arrest

the Salween Peace Park protected area, killing three, injuring seven, and displacing over 10,000.<sup>64</sup> These airstrikes continued on 30 March, when a Tatmadaw fighter plane bombed a gold-panning site under KNU control, killing 11 civilians.<sup>65</sup>

On 12 March, a Tatmadaw aircraft bombed KIA-controlled villages in Hpakant Township (Kachin State), sending villagers fleeing to their local church.<sup>66</sup> On 28–31 March, Tatmadaw jets bombed KIA's 8th and 9th Brigades, and 5th, 11th, 14th Battalions, which are located in civilian areas in Kachin State.<sup>67</sup>

The junta has established three committees: the Central Committee for National Unity and Peacemaking, the National Unity and Peacemaking Working Committee, and the National Unity and Peacemaking Coordination Committee.<sup>68</sup> However, it remains to be seen whether these will be any more productive than the failed Joint Monitoring Committee that has existed since 2016.

### **Desperate junta orders**

In February, the SAC amended provisions of Burma's Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, as well as three other laws: the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law; the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens; and the Electronic Transactions Law. The amendments to the Privacy and Electronic Transaction Laws were made to accommodate key provisions of the proposed Cyber Security Law which was shelved after significant outcry by the business community. These amendments introduce vagueness that allows for the punishment of anybody the SAC perceives as an enemy; and they violate human rights including freedom of expression, assembly, association, privacy, and those related to arrest and trial. Details are available at ALTSEAN's [legal analysis Coup Watch tracker](#).

In March, the junta followed up these legal changes with a string of orders, mainly calling for arrests and punishment. This return to a military-led "law and order" state significantly violates human rights, and shows the insecurity of the SAC, which feels it must use draconian tactics to gain control. Of particular note, **the junta has introduced the death penalty under martial law**.

#### **Harmful orders during March**

- 2 Mar:** • SAC designated 16 labor organizations/unions as illegal.<sup>69</sup>
- SAC charged medical expert U Zaw Wai Soe (from University of Medicine (1)) under Penal Code 505-a; steps are being taken to charge him with treason. On 3 February, SAC charged MoHS Deputy Director for the Department of Human Resources Dr. Win Ko Ko Thein (aka Thakka Moe Nyo) under Telecommunication Law Section 33(a); on 17 February, he was also charged under Penal Code Section 505-a.<sup>70</sup>
- 5 Mar:** • SAC declared that CRPH and its local administrative bodies can face imprisonment up to 22 years or death for high treason, and that those who communicate with these bodies can face up to 7 years under Penal Code Section 124d for committing incitement and intimidation to civil service personnel.<sup>71</sup>
- 9 Mar:** • SAC announced that actions will be taken against printing and photocopy services and shops, under Penal Code 505-a (as amended on 14 Mar 2021), "if they are misleading the political points of view and opposing the government[.]"<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> BNI Multimedia (30 Mar 2021) Burma Military Jets Bomb 10,000 Villagers Out Homes – 3,000 Flee to Safety in Thailand; Salween Peace Park & Karen Peace Support Network (29 Mar 2021) Press release on the Burmese military dictatorship's airstrikes on villages in the Salween Peace Park on 27th–28th, March 2021

<sup>65</sup> The Irrawaddy (31 Mar 2021) Eleven Gold Panners Killed as Myanmar Military Bombs KNU-Controlled Area

<sup>66</sup> Nu Nu Mai (via Twitter) (12 Mar 2021) <https://twitter.com/NuNuMai/status/1370239953330860036>

<sup>67</sup> Kachinland News (29 Mar 2021) Fighter jets bomb KIA's 9th Battalion headquarters as fighting continues; Kachinland News (30 Mar 2021) SAC's fighter jets bomb KIA's 11th and 14th Battalion headquarters; Kachinland News (31 Mar 2021) Two fighter jets attack KIA's 9th Brigade headquarters, Mortar firing continues; Kachinland News (1 Apr 2021) SAC fighter jets attack continues as fighting intensifies

<sup>68</sup> BNI Multimedia Group (19 Feb 2021) SAC seeks 'pragmatic results' with new peace process committees: military spox

<sup>69</sup> SAC, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (2 Mar 2021) Announcement of illegal organizations: labor organizations that are not registered in line with the Labour Organization Law and are therefore illegal

<sup>70</sup> SAC (8 Mar 2021) Announcement for taking legal actions in accordance with the law

<sup>71</sup> SAC (5 Mar 2021) Announcement for CRPH that commits high treason and its organizations

<sup>72</sup> SAC (9 Mar 2021) Actions to be taken when printing and copying services misled political points of view

- 10 Mar:** • SAC announced that pursuant to its Order 1/2021 on 8 March, five national media agencies are banned: Mizzima, DVB, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Now, and 7 Day.<sup>73</sup>
- 15 Mar:** • SAC announced that six Yangon townships are now under martial law: Dagon Myothit (North), Dagon Myothit (South), Dagon Myothit (Seikkan), North Okkalapa, Hlinethaya and Shwepyitha. Decisions by military court-martial are final, and punishment can include death or life in prison with labor.<sup>74</sup>
  - It enumerated 23 laws or causes of action that can be heard by court-martial.<sup>75</sup>
- 17 Mar:** • SAC announced it had charged CRPH representative to the UN Dr. SaSa with high treason under Penal Code Section 122.<sup>76</sup>
- 18 Mar:** • SAC announced it had charged CRPH interim Vice President Mahn Win Khaing Than with high treason under Penal Code Section 122.<sup>77</sup>
- 21 Mar:** • SAC declared CRPH an unlawful organization under Burma's Unlawful Associations Act.<sup>78</sup>
- 23 Mar:** • SAC announced that former union minister Aung Ko will be charged under the Anti-Corruption Law.<sup>79</sup>
- 24 Mar:** • SAC said it had filed lawsuits against 15 CRPH members, and called on civilians to give police any information about these people.<sup>80</sup>

### **International condemnation, sanctions, and corporate withdrawal**

In early March, **Cambodia**, **Thailand**, and **Laos** stated that they agree with **ASEAN's** position, and will work with other ASEAN members towards the goal of lasting peace and stability.<sup>81</sup>

On 4 March, **Japan** Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato condemned the use of violence by the military in Burma.<sup>82</sup> On 12 March, Reuters reported that Japan is holding Myanmar's first satellite onboard the International Space Station, due to concerns that it could be used for military purposes.<sup>83</sup>

On 5 March, **Malaysian** MPs issued a joint statement calling to suspend Myanmar's membership in ASEAN, after security forces killed 38 civilians on 3 March.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, the Kuala Lumpur High Court granted leave for judicial review of the Malaysian government's decision to forcibly repatriate 1,200 Myanmar nationals under the current circumstances.<sup>85</sup>

On 11 March, **Vietnam** Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Le Thi Thu Hang gave a statement that Vietnam was concerned over increasing violence and deaths in Burma.<sup>86</sup>

On 12 March, Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said **Russia** is alarmed by the growing number of civilian casualties in Burma, and is carefully analyzing its military-technical cooperation with the country.<sup>87</sup> However, that seemed to be reversed by its statements on Burma's Armed Forces Day.

On 17 March, six current and former lawmakers from **ASEAN** states issued a statement demanding that their respective governments (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the

<sup>73</sup> SAC (10 Mar 2021) MoI bans five media agencies from publishing

<sup>74</sup> SAC (15 Mar 2021) Martial Law Order 2/2021; SAC (15 Mar 2021) Martial Law Order 3/2021

<sup>75</sup> SAC (16 Mar 2021) Crimes to be heard by Court-Martial

<sup>76</sup> SAC (17 Mar 2021) Lawsuit filed against Dr Sasa and arrest warrant issued

<sup>77</sup> SAC (18 Mar 2021) Legal action charged against U Mahn Win Khine Than

<sup>78</sup> SAC, Ministry of Home Affairs (21 Mar 2021) Order 2/2021 Declaration of Unlawful Association

<sup>79</sup> SAC (23 Mar 2021) Lawsuit filed against former union minister Thura U Aung Ko

<sup>80</sup> SAC (24 Mar 2021) Press release for public information

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cambodia (9 Mar 2021) Statement by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand (11 Mar 2021) Statement on the situation in the Republic of the Union of Burma, 11 March 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR (12 Mar 2021) Statement by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR

<sup>82</sup> Kyodo News (4 Mar 2021) Japan urges Myanmar forces to stop violence against protesters

<sup>83</sup> Reuters (12 Mar 2021) Exclusive: Myanmar's first satellite held by Japan on space station after coup

<sup>84</sup> A Joint Statement by Malaysian Members of Parliament on Killings in Myanmar (5 Mar 2021) ASEAN should suspend Myanmar's membership until killing stops

<sup>85</sup> Amnesty International (9 Mar 2021) AIM and AAM welcome court decision to grant leave for judicial review of deportation of Myanmar nationals

<sup>86</sup> VietnamPlus (11 Mar 2021) Vietnam concerned over escalating violence in Burma: spokesperson

<sup>87</sup> Tass (12 Mar 2021) Kremlin concerned about events in Myanmar, analyzes the situation carefully

Philippines) abandon non-interference, calling ASEAN impotent and handicapped by the self-imposed policy.<sup>88</sup>

On 19 March, UN Acting Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar Andrew Kirkwood said that the killings and arbitrary detentions must stop, and that the future of Burma is at stake.<sup>89</sup>

On 19 March, the US House of Representatives approved, by a vote of 398-14, a resolution condemning the military coup in Burma, calling for a release of detainees and return of democracy.<sup>90</sup>

On 19 March, the EU, US, and UK Ambassadors to Burma issued a statement calling for an end to the “immoral” and “indefensible” violence.<sup>91</sup>

On 19 March, the Malaysian Prime Minister echoed Indonesia’s calls for a high-level ASEAN meeting on Burma, and called the violence against civilians appalling, unacceptable, and deplorable.<sup>92</sup>

On 22 March, international lawmakers issued a statement calling for the immediate release of their colleagues in Burma, and affirming their support for the CRPH.<sup>93</sup> On 25 March, Singapore echoed calls for an ASEAN meeting to address the crisis.<sup>94</sup>

On 25 March, 24 MPs from 12 countries formed the International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar (IPAM), to support fellow lawmakers from Burma, including CRPH members, promote democracy, and ensure accountability.<sup>95</sup>

### Sanctions imposed during March

- 4 Mar:** • European, American, British, Italian and French chambers of commerce announced that they have rejected all invitations to meet with junta representatives, and the Australian chamber of commerce voiced concerns about investment in Burma and called for a swift return to democratic civilian rule.<sup>96</sup>
- The EU suspended all development aid to Burma, which in previous years had amounted to more than USD \$240.7 million.<sup>97</sup>
- 8 Mar:** • The US Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) removed Burma from “Country Group B,” meaning that the country has lost its privileges to several trade licensing exemptions and will be subject to wide-reaching security restrictions.<sup>98</sup>
- 10 Mar:** • The Asian Development Bank (ADB) placed a hold on both disbursements and new contracts in Burma, effective 1 February 2021.<sup>99</sup> Between 2013 and 2019, Burma received more than USD\$3.5 billion from ADB.<sup>100</sup>
- The US imposed sanctions on Tatmadaw leaders’ children and the companies they control.<sup>101</sup>
- 13 Mar:** • The South Korean foreign ministry announced that it will suspend security and defense exchanges with Myanmar in response to the escalation of violence in the country.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Malaysia MP Anwar Ibrahim (via Facebook) (18 Mar 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/anwaribrahim.keadilan/photos/a.10151324968561840/10161454703826840/>

<sup>89</sup> UN Audiovisual Library (19 Mar 2021) UN / Myanmar Andrew Kirkwood

<sup>90</sup> US House of Representatives (19 Mar 2021) H.Res. 134: Condemning the military coup that took place on February 1, 2021, in Burma and the Burmese military detention of civilian leaders, calling for the release of all those detained and for those elected to serve in Parliament to resume their duties, and for other purposes

<sup>91</sup> U.S. Embassy Burma (via Twitter) (19 Mar 2021) <https://twitter.com/USEmbassyBurma/status/1372889220851793922>

<sup>92</sup> The Prime Minister’s Office of Malaysia (19 Mar 2021) Media Statement : The Situation in Myanmar

<sup>93</sup> Asian Parliamentarians for human rights (22 Mar 2021) International lawmakers call for the immediate and unconditional release of their Myanmar colleagues, and for democracy to be upheld

<sup>94</sup> The Diplomat (26 Mar 2021) Singapore Joins Calls for Emergency ASEAN Summit on Myanmar; RFA (25 Mar 2021) Singapore Calls For Regional Leaders’ Summit to Discuss Myanmar Crisis

<sup>95</sup> Asian Parliamentarians for human rights (25 Mar 2021) Global MPs form International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar

<sup>96</sup> Asia Times (6 Mar 2021) Business revolt brewing in coup-crippled Myanmar; Nikkei Asia (5 Mar 2021) Asian companies stay quiet as Western peers condemn Myanmar coup

<sup>97</sup> Bangkok Post (4 Mar 2021) EU suspends development funds for Myanmar

<sup>98</sup> Global Trade (19 Mar 2021) BIS Implements New Burma Export Controls and Adds Four Entities to the Entity List

<sup>99</sup> Asian Development Bank (10 Mar 2021) ADB Statement on New Developments in Myanmar

<sup>100</sup> The Irrawaddy (12 Mar 2021) Asian Development Bank to Halt Funding for Myanmar Government Projects

<sup>101</sup> Reuters (11 Mar 2021) U.S. imposes sanctions on children of Myanmar military leader, companies

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea (13 Mar 2021) Korean Government’s Measures on Situation in Myanmar; Reuters (12 Mar 2021) More protests held in Myanmar as South Korea suspends defence exchanges

- 22 Mar:**
  - The EU sanctioned eleven people directly responsible for the military coup in Burma, freezing their assets and imposing a travel ban.<sup>103</sup> EU diplomats told Reuters that sanctions against military conglomerates MEHL and MEC were likely to follow soon.<sup>104</sup>
  - The US imposed sanctions on two individuals, Than Hlaing and Aung Soe, as well as two infantry divisions, Tatmadaw Light Infantry Divisions 33 and 77.<sup>105</sup>
- 25 Mar:**
  - The US Treasury put sanctions on Tatmadaw conglomerates Myanmar Economic Holdings Public Company Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation Limited (MEC), blocking all property within the US and prohibiting US persons from transacting with these companies.<sup>106</sup> The UK similarly placed sanctions on MEHL on the same day.<sup>107</sup>
  - The US suspended all trade engagement with Burma.<sup>108</sup>
- 30 Mar**
  - Japan Foreign Minister announced that Japan, the largest provider of economic assistance to Burma, would suspend new aid to the country.<sup>109</sup>

### Corporations pull back

Foreign companies and corporate partners continued to distance themselves from the junta.

On 1 March, Australia's Woodside Energy announced that it would fully demobilize its offshore oil and gas drilling exploration in response to ongoing violence in Burma.<sup>110</sup> On 10 March, Google suspended several accounts linked to the Tatmadaw; and Viber stopped all advertising in Burma.<sup>111</sup> On 20 March, French energy company EDF suspended its 671MW Shweli-3 hydropower project in Shan State—worth over \$1.5 billion—because of human rights concerns following the junta's power grab.<sup>112</sup>

On 16 March, Taiwan advised its companies operating in Burma to fly the Taiwanese flag, to distinguish themselves and avoid being targeted in anti-Chinese attacks.<sup>113</sup> On the same day, the South China Morning Post reported that Chinese state firms had been ordered to evacuate non-essential staff.<sup>114</sup>

On 31 March, German company Giesecke and Devrient announced that it had suspended deliveries of raw materials, supplies and system components for the production of banknotes for several weeks.<sup>115</sup>

### Coup destabilizes the economy

Industry insiders estimated that exports have declined as much as 90% since the coup began on 1 February due to shortages of port workers, truck drivers, customs officers, bankers, among others.<sup>116</sup> The World Bank forecasted that Burma's economy is expected to shrink by 10% in 2021; whereas in October 2020, the World Bank projected growth of 5.9% for this year.<sup>117</sup>

The 1–9am internet shutdown, 8pm–4am curfew, and staff walkouts to protest the coup have shut down businesses, including banks, nationwide. "Most banks have been forced to close branches since the coup because they [...] are struggling with staff shortages and the regime's frequent internet shutdowns."<sup>118</sup>

On 1 March, the Central Bank of Myanmar announced that ATM withdrawals would be capped.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Council of the European Union (22 Mar 2021) Myanmar/Burma: EU sanctions 11 people over the recent military coup and ensuing repression

<sup>104</sup> Reuters (22 Mar 2021) EU slaps sanctions on military chiefs involved in Myanmar coup

<sup>105</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury (22 Mar 2021) United States Targets Burmese Military Forces for Repression of Pro-Democracy Protests

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Department of the Treasury (25 Mar 2021) Treasury Sanctions Military Holding Companies in Burma

<sup>107</sup> Reuters (25 Mar 2021) U.S. and Britain blacklist Myanmar military-controlled companies

<sup>108</sup> US News (29 Mar 2021) U.S. Suspends All Trade Engagement With Myanmar Until Elected Government Returns

<sup>109</sup> Bangkok Post (30 Mar 2021) Japan suspends new aid to Myanmar over military coup

<sup>110</sup> Energy Voice (1 Mar 2021) Woodside stops Myanmar work after violence

<sup>111</sup> Reuters (10 Mar 2021) Google and Viber review adverts for Myanmar military-backed telecoms firm

<sup>112</sup> The Irrawaddy (20 Mar 2021) French Energy Giant Halt Myanmar Hydropower Project Over Human Rights Concerns

<sup>113</sup> Mizzima (16 Mar 2021) Taiwan wants firms in Myanmar to fly flags after anti-China attacks

<sup>114</sup> South China Morning Post (16 Mar 2021) China tells state firms in Myanmar to evacuate non-essential staff

<sup>115</sup> Frontier Myanmar (31 Mar 2021) German company halts supply of Myanmar bank note components

<sup>116</sup> Frontier Myanmar (12 Mar 2021) 'Nothing is moving': CDM freezes foreign trade, raising fears of shortages

<sup>117</sup> Reuters (26 Mar) Myanmar's economy to contract 10% this year amid turmoil - World Bank

<sup>118</sup> Financial Times (25 Feb 2021) Myanmar protests imperil economy as banking slows

<sup>119</sup> Straits Times (1 Mar 2021) Myanmar central bank to limit cash withdrawal from banks, ATMs