

BN 2021/2035: 2 May 2021

**BURMA COUP WATCH FOR MONTH OF APRIL 2021:
GOVERNMENT LOCKED OUT OF THE HOUSE
WHILE JUNTA LAUNCHES NEW CIVIL WAR INSIDE**

- The junta, still unable to gain political, territorial or economic control in the third month since its forcible and unconstitutional power grab, has engulfed the entire country in armed conflict. It has escalated military attacks on urban-based movements and border-based ethnic communities.
- Security forces, including notorious units that committed genocidal atrocities against Rohingya people, unleashed lethal battlefield tactics in towns and cities, launched airstrikes on Kachin and Karen states, and shelled villages in Chin, Kachin, Karen, Shan, and Sagaing States/Regions.
- During April alone, security forces killed at least 288 civilians and displaced over 27,000. The junta sentenced 26 civilians to death in military tribunals.
- In total, it has killed at least 845 civilians, injured thousands more, displaced over 47,000 ethnic community members, and detained at least 4,537 politicians, activists, journalists and others, in attacks against the democracy movement.
- The Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) (i.e., the elected parliament) formed an ethnically diverse National Unity Government (NUG).
- ASEAN leaders invited junta leader Min Aung Hlaing—who illegally grabbed power on 1 February—to a meeting, rather than Burma’s legitimate civilian government. The meeting resolution contained “Five Points of Consensus,” including peaceful negotiation and cessation of violence in Burma, but not including the release of political detainees. The junta preceded the meeting by criminalizing the NUG, and followed the meeting by continuing its violence throughout the country.
- The junta’s oppressive attempts to gain control of the country is disintegrating the economy, potentially dragging it back by 15 years. The UN projects that by 2022, 48% of the country will be in poverty.
- In order to avert worse violence and create space for dialogue and negotiations, the movement in Burma and allies urge that:
 - The UN Security Council must work with ASEAN, to ensure it complies with UNSC resolutions on the protection of civilians, the Geneva Conventions, and international human rights standards;
 - The UN, foreign states, and international finance institutions (IFIs) must sanction and stop assisting the junta; and
 - These actors must engage with the NUG as the legitimate government of Burma, rather than the junta.

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Three months into the coup, security forces have killed at least 845 civilians, detained 4,485, and displaced over 47,000 in their crackdown on the democracy movement and anybody they perceive as an enemy.¹ There is progressively less distinction between the crackdown on protesters and the Tatmadaw's pre-existing conflict with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), as an expanding number of EAOs support the National Unity Government (NUG) and old conflicts are folded into the junta's war against the entire country.

Democratic government: birth of NUG

On 16 April, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)—representing 76% of the 498 democratically-elected members of Burma's parliament—announced the formation of the NUG. It explained that this was done in accordance with its 31 March 2021 Federal Democracy Charter, with authority bestowed in the 2020 elections.²

The CRPH announced that it will serve as the legislative branch, while the NUG will serve as the executive branch and will be responsible for forming the judiciary.³

In the new government's first 15 days, NUG's leaders including its Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Minister of Health, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of International Cooperation, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, and Minister of Women, Youth, and Children Affairs (MoWYCA) attended several high level meetings, made key commitments and statements, and contributed to assistance for Karen IDPs.

On 18 April, the MoWYCA held a meeting to discuss issues affecting women, the first of several ministries' top-level meetings in April. Topics discussed included the Rohingya genocide, and the impacts of civil war on women and children.⁴ On 22 April, MoWYCA minister Susanna Hla Hla Soe publicly apologized for failing ethnic minorities, including the Rohingya, under the previous government.⁵

The NUG has received support and endorsement from ethnic groups and other organizations: the Karen National Union, Rvwang Development Association, Kachin Alliance, Lisu National Organization, Kachin Political

Demands of the Burma movement and allies

The UN Security Council must work with ASEAN, to ensure it complies with UNSC resolutions on women, peace, and security, and other relevant topics.

The junta's violence escalated leading up to the ASEAN meeting, and continued afterward. Following the meeting, ASEAN committed to provide humanitarian assistance, and send a delegation, to Burma. It is critical that the UNSC work effectively with ASEAN on this, rather than passively watching the ASEAN process unfold. The UNSC must ensure that ASEAN's interventions comply with UNSC resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467, and 2493 on women, peace, and security; as well as resolutions on youth, peace, and security, on protection of civilians, on human rights, and on justice, rule of law, and impunity.

Foreign states must engage with the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate government of Burma. Despite the junta's attempts to criminalize democratically elected politicians, the CRPH represents 76% of the legitimate government following the November 2020 elections in Burma, and the NUG represents diverse ethnic parties and peoples in Burma.

The UN, foreign states, and international finance institutions (IFIs) must absolutely not assist the junta. This means that they should not give loans or economic assistance that benefit the junta; they should freeze existing loans; and they should sanction the junta economically and militarily.

¹ Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) (30 Apr 2021) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup; Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (updated 23 Apr 2021) Data Export Tool, available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

² Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) (16 Apr 2021) Announcement 23/2021 Formation of the National Unity Government; CRPH (16 Apr 2021) Announcement 24/2021 Formation of the National Unity Government

³ CRPH (16 Apr 2021) News Statement 11

⁴ National Unity Government (via Facebook) (19 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/108426501377990>

⁵ Poppy McPherson (via Twitter) (22 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/poppymcp/status/1385169986549809155>; ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights - APHR (via Facebook) (22 Apr 2021) https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=792966301605507&ref=watch_permalink

Interim Coordination Team, Ta'ang Political Consultative Committee, Union Level Committee of CSOs Peace Forum, Mon National Network, Zomi Re-unification Organization, Karenni State Consultative Council, National League for Democracy, and Myanmar Teachers' Federation.⁶

The NUG also reported, on 23 April, that Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Moe Zaw Oo, Burma Permanent Representative to the UN Kyaw Moe Tun, and a CRPH international relations representative met with diplomats from ASEAN member states, who welcomed the establishment of the NUG and said they will cooperate with it in the future.⁷

Meanwhile, international support for the democratic government of Burma has grown. On 16 April, the NUG Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration said that several Western countries and one Arab country are preparing to recognize the newly-formed NUG.⁸ On 20 April, UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office Minister of State Nigel Adams met online with NUG Minister of International Cooperation Dr. Sa Sa, and afterwards expressed his support for the CRPH and NUG on Twitter.⁹ On 30 April, NUG's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs met with Germany's Federal Foreign Office.¹⁰

CRPH had already been recognized by the German Bundestag and EU parliamentarians;¹¹ had talks with

Of the 26 NUG members so far, eight are women and 15 are non-Bamar (Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Kayan, Mon, Shanni, and Ta'ang). In addition to the currently-designated roles, the NUG will continue to grow, with the aim of having the most ethnically inclusive government. This diversity is an important step toward the common goal of a genuine democratic, federal system.

U Win Myint President
Daw Aung San Suu Kyi State Counsellor
Duwa Lashi La Vice President
Mahn Win Khaing Than Prime Minister

Ministers

Daw Zin Mar Aung Foreign Affairs
U Lwin Ko Latt Home Affairs & Immigration
U Yee Mon Defence
Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong Federal Union Affairs
U Tin Tun Naing Planning, Finance & Investment
Dr. Win Myat Aye Humanitarian Affairs & Disaster Relief
Dr. Sa Sa International Cooperation
Dr. Zaw Wai Soe Education
Dr. Zaw Wai Soe Health
Dr. Too Khaung Natural Resources & Environmental Conservation
Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe Women, Youth & Children Affairs

Deputy Ministers

U Moe Zaw Oo Foreign Affairs
Khu The Bu Home Affairs & Immigration
Daw Khin Ma Ma Myo Defence
Naing Kaung Yut Defence
U Chit Tun Federal Union Affairs
Maing Win Htoo Federal Union Affairs
Min Zayar Oo Planning, Finance & Investment
Naw Htoo Phaw Humanitarian Affairs & Disaster Management
Jar Htawe Pan Education
Dr. Shwe Pon Health
Khun Bedu Natural Resources & Environmental Conservation
Daw Ei Thinzar Maung Women, Youth & Children Affairs

CRPH (16 Apr 2021) Announcement 23/2021 Formation of the National Unity Government; CRPH (16 Apr 2021) Announcement 24/2021 Formation of the National Unity Government; CRPH (16 Apr 2021) News Statement 11; CRPH (5 Mar 2021) CRPH (Union Parliament) Political Visions

⁶ NUG (via Facebook) (19 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/107842168103090>; NUG (via Facebook) (19 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/108882704665703>

⁷ NUG (via Facebook) (23 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/110655037821803>

⁸ Myanmar NOW (16 Apr 2021) Some countries will officially recognise Myanmar's shadow government in the coming days, says new minister

⁹ Nigel Adams (via Twitter) (20 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/nadams/status/1384529328059424770>

¹⁰ NUG (via Facebook) (30 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/NUGmyanmar/posts/112974514256522>

¹¹ German Foreign Office (via Twitter) (3 Mar 2021) <https://twitter.com/GermanyDiplo/status/1367067696458825734>; European Parliament (9 Mar 2021) Leading MEPs on latest developments in Myanmar, 9 March 2021

Indonesia and Canada;¹² and received the support of the International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar (IPAM), formed by 24 MPs from 12 countries to support fellow lawmakers from Burma, including CRPH members, promote democracy, and ensure accountability.¹³ On 9 April, the Chinese Embassy in Burma confirmed that it has had communication with the CRPH, and said “The purpose is to play the role of promoting peace and discussion, promoting the cooling of the situation and maintaining stability in Myanmar, resolving differences through dialogue and consultation, and continuing to drive the process of democratic transformation.”¹⁴

De jure authority—what is it, and who has it in Burma?

De jure, or legal, authority for a national governing role comes from the constitution and laws of a country (and sometimes, international laws or practice). In the case of most democracies, leaders are typically chosen through a vote, pursuant to domestic laws that say so. Burma has been a democracy since 2015. There were legitimate elections conducted in November 2020, and the results indicated clearly who would have legal/de jure authority moving forward. A coup does not automatically change the laws of a country, and it does not invalidate the country’s election results.

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) is just what it sounds like: it is a group of elected representatives who represent the parliamentarians elected in 2020. Although the junta has tried to imprison and intimidate these officials, the CRPH consists of 76% of them, and has carried out its mandate to the best of its ability under the current circumstances. In fact, under Burma’s 2008 Constitution, this is well over the proportion of parliamentarians required for convening and decision-making.

On 16 April, the CRPH formed the National Unity Government (NUG) to function as the executive body of government, while the CRPH is the legislative body of government, in Burma.

CRPH and NUG therefore have de jure authority.

On 21 April, the junta declared the NUG an unlawful association, meaning that anybody promoting or assisting it can be sentenced to five years in prison.¹⁵ This was the latest in the junta’s attempts to criminalize political opposition; it previously declared that members of the CRPH and local CRPH

De facto authority—what is it, and who has it in Burma?

De facto, or practical, authority for a national governing role is more complicated, and is a question of power and control. This encompasses economic, military, and political power and control. Typically de facto authority is a phrase reserved for those without de jure authority, which is why some claim the junta has de facto authority.

The Tatmadaw’s international political power is subject to international recognition. Many countries have refused to recognize it.

The Tatmadaw’s domestic political control has been severely eroded by ongoing nationwide protests against it, refusal of civil servants to operate under it, and the existence of the NUG.

The Tatmadaw’s military power is its strongest asset, since it is by far the largest and best-equipped military in Burma. However, it has not been able to beat out EAOs around the country, which are increasingly banding together, and more and more civilians are also attempting to directly fight it (see *Attempts to stop defections*, page 8).

The junta has lost control of the economy, due to general strikes protesting the coup, the junta’s own widespread destructive reactions to resistance, a severe loss of investor confidence, and a range of sanctions.

These interacting and spiraling factors have seriously undermined the Tatmadaw’s previous economic might (see *Coup continues to destabilize Burma’s economy*, page 19).

It is therefore not clear that the junta has de facto authority.

¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia (24 Feb 2021) Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia - Press Briefing on the Outcome of the Visit to Bangkok; Southeast Asia Globe (12 Mar 2021) Vying for legitimacy as Myanmar’s recognised government, who are the CRPH?

¹³ Asian Parliamentarians for human rights (25 Mar 2021) Global MPs form International Parliamentarians Alliance for Myanmar

¹⁴ Reuters (9 Apr 2021) China in touch with ‘all parties’ in Myanmar, embassy says

¹⁵ State Administration Council (SAC) (21 Apr 2021) Ministry of Home Affairs Press Release

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 of civil service personnel.¹⁶

The CRPH made a number of other important declarations and statements in April:

- It condemned the junta's indiscriminate air strikes in Karen State, and expressed solidarity with the Karen National Union (KNU)'s prior statement on the issue;¹⁷
- It acknowledged the importance of education to Burma's future, and said it will work with students and ethnic nationalities to develop a federalized education system;¹⁸
- It instructed civil servants in the education sector not to attend junta-facilitated trainings, said it would not recognize these, and assured them that there would soon be work opportunities in the new federal education system;¹⁹
- It called for the suspension of hiring and training procedures for all civil service positions, and said it will not recognize civil servants hired since 1 February;²⁰ and
- It released CRPH Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Zin Mar Aung's briefing on her meeting with the UN Security Council.²¹

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.](#)

Air strikes and a new civil war

Increasingly, the Tatmadaw is at war with everybody in Burma—not only EAOs. On 24 April, the Irrawaddy reported on a series of internal Tatmadaw memos demanding that security forces on the ground “annihilate” anti-regime protesters wherever they encounter them.²²

In just the first three weeks of April, there were over 400 violent attacks on civilians or armed clashes.²³

In April, the Tatmadaw continued its air strikes, carrying out 61 in Karen and Kachin States (see table, page 14). It also shelled villages in Karen, Kachin, Shan, and Chin States, and Sagaing Region, displacing tens of thousands.

Kachin State

13 Apr: Following a skirmish, security forces went to Hpakant Town and fired indiscriminately, injuring five civilians.²⁴

15 Apr: The Tatmadaw kidnapped 50 civilians in Sumprabum/Putao Township, who were forced to walk ahead of Tatmadaw vehicles—as human shields—to prevent Kachin Independence Army (KIA) attacks.²⁵

21 Apr: A Shan politician said that fighting between the KIA and Tatmadaw in Momauk Township had forced the inhabitants of 50 Shan villages to flee their homes. Tatmadaw air strikes had destroyed a monastery and several civilian homes. He claimed that over 20,000 villagers living along the Tar Pein River were displaced.²⁶

¹⁶ SAC (5 Mar 2021) Announcement for CRPH that commits high treason and its organizations

¹⁷ CRPH (2 Apr 2021) Statement 21/2021

¹⁸ CRPH (5 Apr 2021) Statement 22/2021

¹⁹ CRPH (Ministry of Education) (5 Apr 2021) Order 2/2021 Instruction to all civil servants in education

²⁰ CRPH (Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry) (9 Apr 2021) Statement 7/2021 Suspension of all procedures on selection and training of civil servants

²¹ CRPH (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (9 Apr 2021) Briefing on UNSC meeting

²² The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar Regime Troops Ordered to 'Annihilate' Protesters, Internal Memos Show

²³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (updated 23 Apr 2021) Data Export Tool, available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

²⁴ Kachinland News (14 Apr 2021) Battles continue across Kachin region

²⁵ Kachin News Group (16 Apr 2021) Tatmadaw Using Civilians As Human Shields in Putao District

²⁶ Shan Herald (21 Apr 2021) Civilians Flee Fighting in Kachin State; Villagers Uprooted By Clashes in Northern Shan State Need Food

22 Apr: Local Christian associations reported that clashes between the KIA and Tatmadaw in Momauk Township had displaced over 2,000 people since 15 April. The Tatmadaw had planted landmines that killed local peoples' buffaloes and cows, and local people were forced to pay compensation to the military for detonating the mines.²⁷ On 24 April, the Tatmadaw forced local residents to search for landmines, and to clear vegetation along roadsides.²⁸

Karen State

10 Apr: The KNU reported the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) had clashed with the Tatmadaw over 200 times since 1 February, in all seven KNU Brigade areas. It estimated 30,000 people were displaced across KNU territory between 27 March and 10 April. The military killed 19 people and injured 27 more in 15 air strikes across nine locations. A school, hospital, and civilian homes were also destroyed.²⁹

12 Apr: The Tatmadaw fired mortars into a village—wounding a 15-year-old girl—and on civilians working in rice fields in Dwe Lo Township/Hpapun Township (Tatmadaw LIB 708); and into two villages in Hpapun Town.³⁰ More Tatmadaw mortars the next day displaced an entire village.³¹

17–18 Apr: The Tatmadaw fired on aid convoys delivering supplies to IDPs in Karen State, because the local units were starving and wanted the food for themselves, said an aid worker.³²

21 Apr: The KNU reported that the Tatmadaw was flying over KNU-controlled areas every day with jets; and that when villagers fled, ground troops looted civilians' food from their homes.³³

28 Apr: The Tatmadaw carried out at least six air strikes.³⁴

Shan State

18 Apr: The Tatmadaw shelled a Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) camp, and some shells landed near IDP housing in Loikaw Wan, Tachileik Township.³⁵ Shelling continued on 19 April. Over 2,500 IDPs in the camp packed their belongings and prepared to flee into Thailand if shelling intensified.³⁶

26 Apr: A Tatmadaw regional commander directed four local Tatmadaw-aligned militias in Kholan, Namhsam Township to each recruit 100 more members. He told the militias to arrest protesters seeking refuge in their areas and return them to the junta's control; in return, he promised that the Tatmadaw would provide aid for regional development.³⁷

Sagaing Region and Chin State

5 Apr: The Kuki National Organization/Army of Burma (KNO/A) announced that it had launched an armed attack on a fire station in Namphalong Mittayung, Tamu Township (Sagaing Region), and that further attacks "will persist."³⁸

20 Apr: Tatmadaw forces opened fire on villagers in three villages in Yinmabin Township (Sagaing Region), killing at least one, after using drones to locate the villages' security team.³⁹

²⁷ Burma News International (22 Apr 2021) Around 2,000 people displaced by fighting in Moemauk

²⁸ Kachinland News (24 Apr 2021) SAC's 142 LIB troops force local residents search landmines

²⁹ Network Media Group (10 Apr 2021) Fighting Happening in all of KNU's Seven Brigades

³⁰ Free Burma Rangers (17 Apr 2021) Burma Army attacks continue to kill and maim in Northern Karen State

³¹ Free Burma Rangers (17 Apr 2021) Burma Army attacks continue to kill and maim in Northern Karen State

³² Thet (Metta Development Foundation), via Twitter (23 Apr 2021)

<https://twitter.com/AutumnThet/status/1385422204867735554>

³³ KNU Department of Information, via Facebook (21 Apr 2021) available at

<https://www.facebook.com/KNUDOIHQ/photos/a.446495589066103/1418830725165913/> (Burmese)

³⁴ International Karen Organization, via Twitter (28 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/lkoKaren/status/1387353020313243648>;

Wahkushee Tenner, via Twitter (28 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/WahkusheeT/status/1387366876133482500>

³⁵ Shan Herald (20 Apr 2021) Tatmadaw Attacks RCSS Base Along Thai-Burma Border

³⁶ Shan State Refugee Committee (20 Apr 2021) 2,500 IDPs on high alert after Burma Army shelling and troop reinforcement near Loi Kaw Wan IDP camp on southern Shan State-Thai border

³⁷ Burma News International (26 Apr 2021) Army urges their militias to increase their forces in southern Shan State

³⁸ KNA/Min Thang Haokip, via Facebook (5 Apr 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=471445350950060&set=gm.1645824712294582>

³⁹ Myanmar Now (20 Apr 2021) Crackdown on village in Sagaing Region leaves at least one person dead

22 Apr: Chin people in Kalay Township (Sagaing Region), Falam Township (Chin State), and in the diaspora declared the founding of the Chin National Organization (CNO) and its Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) as the fourth Chin EAO.⁴⁰ On 26 April, Chin World Media reported the formation of the Chinland Defence Force (CDF).⁴¹

25–26 Apr: The CDF and Tatmadaw clashed in Mindat (Chin State). The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) reported 15 Tatmadaw casualties, including 10 killed in an ambush.⁴² On 27 April, the Tatmadaw attacked Mindat and surrounding areas, using rocket launchers and artillery.⁴³

Offensives cross international lines

The following incidents were documented:

12 Apr: A Tatmadaw jet crossed into Chinese airspace and a warning shot was fired from the ground. Several artillery shells fired by the Tatmadaw also landed in China.⁴⁴

22 Apr: The Tatmadaw fired on a boat carrying Thai Border Police officers on the Salween River (which forms the Thai-Burma border) in Thailand’s Mae Hong Son Province.⁴⁵

27 Apr: The KNLA captured and burned to the ground a Tatmadaw outpost overlooking the Thai-Burma border in Hpapun Township/Mutraw District (Karen State). Residents in the Thai village of Mae Sam Laep heard gunfire and explosions, and later saw the base burning.⁴⁶ Several hundred former residents of Mae Sam Lap are now displaced within Thailand.

Junta relations with EAOs

On 26 April, the junta’s National Unity and Peace Coordination Committee met with the DKBA and the KNU/KNLA-PC, two smaller EAOs operating in Karen State, aiming to strengthen ties with them.⁴⁷

On the opposing side, EAOs sought to strengthen ties with each other. The 10 EAOs that signed the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement agreed on 26–27 April to meet with the other most powerful EAOs, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), United Wa State Army (UWSA), Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Arakan Army (AA), and Karenni Army (KA).⁴⁸ The TNLA, MNDAA, and AA, which form the “Brotherhood Alliance,” have already stated publicly that they would oppose the junta if it continues to attack civilians.⁴⁹

Attempts to stop defections

Junta leaders have **combined intimidation and propaganda to prevent foot soldiers from defecting.**

On 12 April, the Tatmadaw senior command told armed forces and regional commands in ethnic states to be aware that the Tatmadaw “is the only legal armed force” and “has to work for democracy and development with full strength.”⁵⁰

On 16 April, the Tatmadaw issued a warning to its command and field units that “all responsible persons at all level of forces [are] to prohibit troops and families from listening to the media and explain to them at least twice a week that such broadcasts are lies.”⁵¹

⁴⁰ Chin World Media/Chin National Organization, via Twitter (22 Apr 2021)

https://twitter.com/media_chin/status/1385063584107925511

⁴¹ Chin World Media/Chin National Organization, via Twitter (22 Apr 2021)

https://twitter.com/media_chin/status/1385063584107925511

⁴² Radio Free Asia (26 Apr 2021) Attacks by an Ethnic Militia Kill Some 15 Junta Troops in Myanmar’s Chin State

⁴³ Myanmar Now (27 Apr 2021) Military ‘uses rocket launchers’ in attack on resistance fighters in Chin State

⁴⁴ Kachinland News (13 Apr 2021) SAC’s fighter jets incessantly bomb Alaw Bum, artillery shells fell into China

⁴⁵ Salween Press, via Facebook (23 Apr 2021)

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3689070317870608&id=422055381238801

⁴⁶ Al Jazeera (27 Apr 2021) Fighting erupts in eastern Myanmar near Thai border

⁴⁷ SAC (27 Apr 2021) National Unity and Peace Coordination Committee meets officials of DKBA, KNU/KNLA-PC separately

⁴⁸ The Diplomat (29 Apr 2021) Myanmar Ethnic Rebel Coalition to Begin Unity Talks: Report

⁴⁹ Myanmar Now (30 Mar 2021) Brotherhood Alliance tells military to stop killings, threatens to abandon ceasefire

⁵⁰ The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar Regime Troops Ordered to ‘Annihilate’ Protesters, Internal Memos Show

⁵¹ The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar Regime Troops Ordered to ‘Annihilate’ Protesters, Internal Memos Show

On 17 April, the military's high command instructed all units "not to allow strangers to come into the military camps or surrounding areas." Senior commanders had already banned mid-ranking officers from using Facebook, in order to isolate them and control the information they can access.⁵²

A New York Times feature on interviews with four Tatmadaw defectors described soldiers' insular lives in the military, explaining that most officers and their families live in military compounds and have their every move monitored. It quoted a captain who said "most of the soldiers are brainwashed"; and another captain who said "I would call this situation modern slavery." A military doctor said "I want to quit, but I can't. If I do, they will send me to prison. If I run away, they will torture my family members." According to these soldiers, the internet shutdown "was aimed as much at isolating troops who were beginning to question their orders as it was at cutting off the wider population."⁵³

The junta **targeted defecting police and military** members with death. On 27 April, in Tamu Township (Sagaing Region), security forces shot dead a soldier who defected to the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), during a clash.⁵⁴ Nationwide, junta officers have reportedly left the military and joined the CDM as they are 'disgusted' by the regime's murder of civilians. Defectors said that many more would be willing to disobey the dictatorship, but they fear for their families' safety.⁵⁵

There have been multiple attacks on Tatmadaw military bases in central Burma, leading to speculation that the unclaimed attacks may have been by defectors. On 29 April, there were rocket attacks on air force bases in Meiktila (Mandalay Region) and Magway (Magway Region), reportedly killing six Tatmadaw soldiers, and a fire broke out in the Tatmadaw 35th Infantry Division's armory in Bago.⁵⁶

Some defectors have even trained protestors on defense tactics. On 1 April, a resistance group led by police defectors killed five Burma police in Tamu.⁵⁷

Hundreds of security forces have defected. In March, it was reported that 12 Tatmadaw soldiers had defected to the KNU.⁵⁸ As of late March, around 280 police had fled to India.⁵⁹ In February, over 200 police officers joined the CDM in Kayah State.⁶⁰

Junta's violent crackdown

In April, the junta continued to unleash lethal violence throughout the country, killing, injuring, or otherwise harming civilians in the towns and cities of each State and Region. For example:

3 Apr: The Tatmadaw shot and killed a teacher in Thaton (Mon State).⁶¹

7 Apr: Tatmadaw forces arrested about 11 university students and civil society leaders at night in Matupi Township (Chin State). The next morning, they arrested individuals suspected of participating in protests against the military regime. At least eight of those released reported violence in detention.⁶²

12 Apr: Thousands of people fled their homes after the junta's security forces conducted raids on three villages in Taungdwingyi Township (Magway Region).⁶³

12 Apr: The Tatmadaw shelled several areas of the Bhamo-Myitkyina road in Momauk Township (Kachin State), killing four civilians and injuring two others, including a monk.⁶⁴

15 Apr: Soldiers attacked Muslims sleeping in a mosque in Mandalay as the month of Ramadan began. The soldiers killed one civilian, injured several, and detained at least five, including three children.⁶⁵

⁵² The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar Regime Troops Ordered to 'Annihilate' Protesters, Internal Memos Show

⁵³ New York Times (updated 17 Apr 2021) Inside Myanmar's Army: 'They See Protesters as Criminals'

⁵⁴ Myanmar Now (29 Apr 2021) Soldier who defected to CDM shot dead by junta's forces in Tamu clash, say resistance fighters

⁵⁵ Myanmar Now (13 Apr 2021) Junta uses control over military families to prevent defections, say army insiders

⁵⁶ Radio Free Asia (29 Apr 2021) Myanmar Air Force Bases Hit by 'Improvised Rocket Attacks'

⁵⁷ Myanmar Now (3 Apr 2021) Attack on Tamu police outpost ends with six officers dead

⁵⁸ Myanmar Now (2 Mar 2021) Myanmar army soldiers defect to KNU to side with anti-coup protesters

⁵⁹ Reuters (25 Mar 2021) The secret network helping hundreds of Myanmar police flee to India

⁶⁰ Radio Free Asia (16 Apr 2021) Parallel Myanmar Government Launched to Challenge Military Junta

⁶¹ AAPP (18 Apr 2021) Fatality List for April 18, 2021 (English)

⁶² BNI (13 Apr 2021) Authorities arrests students in Western Chin State

⁶³ Myanmar Now (13 Apr 2021) Locals flee as soldiers raid more than 1000 homes in three Magwe Region villages

⁶⁴ Kachinland News (13 Apr 2021) SAC's 366th Artillery Battalion's arbitrary shelling kills 4 civilians and injures 2

⁶⁵ Myanmar Now (15 Apr 2021) As Ramadan begins, soldiers attack sleeping Muslims at Mandalay mosque

17 Apr: Security forces killed two protesters during a demonstration to welcome the NUG in Mogok (Mandalay Region). Police officers transported the bodies of the two men on a cart, and shot at people who tried to pick up the bodies.⁶⁶

19 Apr: Armed forces shot at demonstrators to prevent them from gathering, and arrested people in their homes suspected of resisting the military regime, in Aung Pan Township (Shan State).⁶⁷

22 Apr: Armed forces killed two people, including one child, and detained at least 27 people for protesting in Muse (Shan State).⁶⁸

The Bago massacre—over 80 killed, 100,000 temporarily displaced

On 9 April, security forces began a massive crackdown in **Bago** (Bago Region), using assault rifles, RPGs, and hand grenades.⁶⁹

By 11 April, security forces had killed over 80 protesters, and sent around 100,000 residents seeking safety elsewhere.⁷⁰

Junta authorities prevented medical workers from treating the injured.⁷¹ Following this, the military remained stationed at temples and schools, and charged people USD 85 to retrieve their relatives' bodies.⁷²

On 18 April, Tatmadaw soldiers destroyed a gravesite for 12 civilians they had killed. They called their burial illegal, destroyed the monument, dug up the bodies, and re-buried them in unmarked graves.⁷³

Brutality in Sagaing Region

11 Apr: A sniper shot two people as they drove past a police station, killing one, in Tamu.⁷⁴

12 Apr: Security forces launched a six-hour assault in the early morning in Tamu. They shot a seven-year-old; and raided a hospital, destroyed equipment, and beat staff.⁷⁵

13 Apr: Armed forces killed an ethnic Gurkha husband and wife while the couple was driving to sell milk in Tamu.⁷⁶

18 Apr: Hundreds of villagers fled after the military raided their village, following a roadside shootout on the Monywa-Kalewa highway, in Chanungma village, Kani Township.⁷⁷

20 Apr: Regime forces opened fire on villagers and shot at least one civilian dead. The junta used drones to locate the villagers' security team and then attacked with heavy weapons, in three villages in Yinmabin Township.⁷⁸

22 Apr: Junta forces abducted and tortured three young people in Tamu. One, who was in critical condition, was denied medical treatment.⁷⁹

Tactics of fear and repression

The junta and its security forces used a variety of tactics in April to repress the population and instill fear, all of which violated people's human rights.

⁶⁶ Myanmar Now (17 Apr 2021) Junta troops kill two protesters in Mogok at National Unity Government Rally

⁶⁷ Shan News (22 Apr 2021) Protesters in Shan State face difficulties resisting regime amid killings and arrests

⁶⁸ Shan News (22 Apr 2021) Protesters in Shan State face difficulties resisting regime amid killings and arrests

⁶⁹ AAPP (18 Apr 2021) Fatality List for April 18, 2021 (English)

⁷⁰ Radio Free Asia (12 Apr 2021) Tens of Thousands of Residents Flee Bago in Wake of Assault by Myanmar Security Forces

⁷¹ Mizzima (11 Apr 2021) Scores killed in Myanmar's Bago as UN envoy calls for 'strong action'

⁷² CNN (12 Apr 2021) Myanmar's military is charging families \$85 to retrieve bodies of relatives killed in crackdown; Myanmar

Now (11 Apr 2021) Mass murders reported in Bago as troops 'drag away' injured and dead, destroy evidence of crimes

⁷³ Myanmar Now (19 Apr 2021) Junta soldiers destroy Bago cemetery gravesite of slain protesters

⁷⁴ Myanmar Now (11 Apr 2021) Motorbike driver killed by sniper in Tamu, locals say

⁷⁵ The Irrawaddy (12 Apr 2021) Girl, 7, shot as Myanmar regime forces attack protesters near Indian border

⁷⁶ Myanmar Now (14 Apr) Husband and wife shot dead on motorbike by junta's armed forces in Tamu

⁷⁷ The Irrawaddy (18 April 2021) Hundreds of villagers flee after Myanmar military raid in Sagaing

⁷⁸ Myanmar Now (20 Apr 2021) Crackdown on village in Sagaing Region leaves at least one person dead

⁷⁹ The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar Junta Forces Abduct and Torture Three More in Tamu

Security forces **tortured and abused detainees**. On 14 April, in Sanchaung Township (Yangon Region), a policeman sexually harassed a female 17-year-old protester in detention. Once moved to Insein Prison, she met other detained girls and women, one of whom security forces had subjected to sexual violence. The woman had a bruised face and split lips, from violence on 19 April, and said that the perpetrator had kicked her in the groin until she bled.⁸⁰ Between 17 and 19 April, the Tatmadaw arrested over 30 people and tortured some, if not all, of them. Tatmadaw-run Myawaddy TV showed pictures of six of them, who showed signs of severe torture.⁸¹

The junta **arrested protesters in large numbers**. For example, on 15 April, across four states and regions, the junta arrested over 35 protest leaders, celebrities, and activists in a single day. Among those arrested were workers' rights activist Daw Myo Aye, and director of Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar and actor Zin Wyne.⁸²

The junta **unduly restricted people's lives**. On 22 April, in Htantalan Township (Chin State), the military ordered five villages located on the road to the Chin National Front (CNF) headquarters to stay inside, by means of a curfew. Locals believe that the junta imposed the curfew to bar CDM staff and youth leaders from fleeing the area.⁸³

Civilians sentenced to death by court martial

In the six Yangon Townships under martial law, the junta began prosecuting protesters by court-martial, and sentenced several to death. On 11 April, a military tribunal sentenced 19 civilians to death, and on 15 April, a military tribunal sentenced another seven. Though the death penalty has existed in Burma since 1988, nobody was ever executed; these 26 cases would be the first.⁸⁴

According to international practice, trial by court-martial is reserved for members of the armed forces and prisoners of war. The use of this tactic by the junta seems to be not only inappropriate but another tacit acknowledgement that it is at war with the very people it claims to be governing.

Criminal prosecution of activists

The State Administration Council (SAC) announced that it had opened criminal files against 60 people in April, charged under Penal Code Section 505-A for "intentionally committing incitements to the government employees to join CDM to affect government mechanism and for spreading information showing their support for unlawful CRPH including fake news and other information to unrest riots and threaten the public on the social media."⁸⁵ On 9 and 10 April, it opened criminal cases against a model and two actors, respectively, under the same law.⁸⁶

On 14 April, the junta announced that it had also opened criminal files against 101 medical doctors under the same law, for "inciting State service personnel and health staff to participate in CDM activities, themselves participating in it, supporting CDM activities and CRPH unlawful association with the aim of deteriorating the State administrative machinery."⁸⁷ Moreover, it said, "medical doctors from people's hospitals participating in CDM activities, not in line with the medical doctor ethics and codes of conduct of civil service personnel, private hospitals and clinics which admitted those medical

⁸⁰ Radio Free Asia (22 Apr 2021) Interview: Myanmar Police Take Unyielding Detainees in Handcuffs For 'Beatings And Torture'

⁸¹ The Irrawaddy (19 Apr 2021) Myanmar Regime Detains, Tortures Yangon Residents After Bombing of Govt Office

⁸² The Irrawaddy (15 Apr 2021) Myanmar regime arrests about 36 protest leaders, celebrities, and activists in a single day

⁸³ BNI (22 Apr 2021) Army orders people in five villages of Htantalan Township to stay indoors

⁸⁴ Myanmar Now (16 Apr 2021) Death sentences: the junta's latest tactic to instill fear

⁸⁵ SAC (15 Apr 2021) Those spreading false news to affect State stability charged under Section 505-A; SAC (20 Apr 2021) Those spreading false news to affect State stability charged under Section 505-A; SAC (21 Apr 2021) Those spreading false news to affect State stability charged under Section 505-A

⁸⁶ SAC (9 Apr 2021) Model Paing Takun arrested at his home in Yangon; SAC (10 Apr 2021) Actor Pyay Ti Oo, Actress Eindra Kyaw Zin arrested in Bahan

⁸⁷ SAC (14 Apr 2021) Files opened against medical doctors who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State; SAC (15 Apr 2021) Files opened against medical doctors who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State; SAC (20 Apr 2021) Files opened against medical doctors who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State; SAC (21 Apr 2021) Files opened against medical doctors who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State; SAC (21 Apr 2021) Work licences of private hospitals, clinics that were not in line with the laws; SAC (27 Apr 2021) Files opened against medical doctors who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State

doctors and private hospitals and clinics of the medical doctors taken action under the law for inciting CDM activity and participating in riots would also be revoked of their licences [sic].”⁸⁸

On 15 April, in Monywa (Sagaing Region), security forces arrested Wai Moe Naing, a prominent Muslim protest leader. An unmarked police car rammed him while he was leading a motorbike protest rally.⁸⁹ The following day, a picture of him looking badly tortured went viral online, and it was announced that he faced warrants for criminal charges including the alleged murder of two police officers, theft, and incitement.⁹⁰ On 24 April, he was charged with murder, unlawful assembly, wrongful confinement, abduction with intent to murder, and incitement. He faces a total of 28 years in prison. His lawyer has not been allowed to meet with his client and does not know where he is detained.⁹¹

Increasing efforts to control media, restrict information

On 22 April, the SAC announced that the Myanmar Press Council had been reconstituted.⁹² In February, 11 members of the Myanmar Press Council and more than 12 Myanmar Times staff left their jobs in protest against junta directives not to use the word “regime” or “junta,” or otherwise report in a way it views as “instigating public unrest.”⁹³

8 Apr: Security forces captured and detained Thin Thin Aung, founder of the CSO Women for Justice and the Mizzima News Agency, in Yangon.⁹⁴

12–13 Apr: Security forces arrested three reporters from the Myitkyina Journal in Myitkyina (Kachin State).⁹⁵

18 Apr: Military authorities detained Japanese journalist Yuki Kitazumi in Yangon. The Japanese government sought his release.⁹⁶

24 Apr: Military troops arrested journalist and writer Tu Tu Tha, two of her relatives, and a family friend, in Yangon. She was a former editor at The Irrawaddy and worked at the Thanlyin Post.⁹⁷

24 Apr: The junta outlawed the Molotov Journal and threatened “action will be taken against anyone who operates the journal works [sic] without a permit and provides assistance.”⁹⁸

25 Apr: Security forces arrested former Democratic Voice of Burma cameraman Ko Thura Soe in Yangon.⁹⁹

27 Apr: Security forces arrested two journalists from Voice of Myanmar in Mandalay.¹⁰⁰

As of 26 April, security forces had detained at least 77 journalists, in all but three of Burma’s 15 States/Regions/Union Territory.¹⁰¹

Burma-based newspapers have stopped including by-lines in their articles, in an apparent effort to protect the security of their journalists.

The junta’s **internet shutdown/restrictions** continued in April, with the junta ramping up restrictions in a desperate attempt to prevent civilians and security forces from accessing information. Nightly (1–9am) internet blackouts began on 15 February, mobile data was completely disconnected starting on 15 March, and public wifi was limited starting on 18 March.¹⁰² Local junta officials **declared satellite**

⁸⁸ SAC (21 Apr 2021) Work licences of private hospitals, clinics that were not in line with the laws

⁸⁹ Reuters (15 Apr 2021) Myanmar security forces arrest prominent leader of anti-coup campaign

⁹⁰ The Irrawaddy (16 Apr 2021) 'Panda of Monywa' remains in Myanmar regime's custody as fear for his safety grows

⁹¹ Myanmar Now (24 Apr 2021) Wai Moe Naing faces 28-year prison sentence as junta hits him with five charges

⁹² SAC (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar press council re-elects council Members

⁹³ The Irrawaddy (18 Feb 2021) Myanmar Journalists Leave Jobs in Face of Military Regime Restrictions on Media Freedom

⁹⁴ Women’s League of Burma (via Facebook) (9 Apr 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/wlbpower/photos/a.174984512529948/4518221088206247/>

⁹⁵ The Irrawaddy (17 Apr 2021) Myanmar regime arrests three journalists in Kachin state capital

⁹⁶ Reuters (19 Apr 2021) Japanese journalist detained in Myanmar; The Japan Times (24 Apr 2021) Japan ambassador speaks with journalist held in Myanmar

⁹⁷ Myanmar Now (25 Apr 2021) Writer and journalist Tu Tu Tha detained with her son in Yangon

⁹⁸ SAC (24 Apr 2021) Announcement

⁹⁹ The Irrawaddy (26 Apr 2021) Myanmar’s Junta Continues to Arrest Journalists

¹⁰⁰ The Irrawaddy (30 Apr 2021) Two Mandalay Journalists Seized by Myanmar Junta Forces

¹⁰¹ Reporting ASEAN (visited 1 May 2021) IN NUMBERS: Arrests of Journalists and Media Staff in Myanmar

¹⁰² NetBlocks (updated 24 Mar 2021) Internet disrupted in Myanmar amid apparent military uprising

dishes illegal and forced people to take them down from their homes in April, to further limit their access to information.¹⁰³

On 26 April, the junta amended the Television and Video Law, increasing the penalty for violation: “If anyone is handed down a sentence for failure to abide by the order or directive issued by this law or the video censorship board or the video industry scrutiny and central supervisory committee, the person shall be sentenced to less than one year imprisonment or less than K500,000 fine or both.”¹⁰⁴

On 25 April, the junta outlawed the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).¹⁰⁵ AAPP has consistently reported (daily) on security forces’ violence, tallying the number of civilians killed, arrested, detained, and charged.

Protests continue despite dangers

The CDM and Strike Committees continued to protest in April across the country.

10 Apr: Protestors held a “gender-swap” march, where women and men switched their clothes and appearance in Loikaw (Kayah State) to highlight the social disruption caused by the military coup.¹⁰⁶

21 Apr: Activists held their annual “blue shirt” protest to commemorate activist U Win Tin, calling for the release of detained prisoners.¹⁰⁷

24 Apr: Protesters staged a mock funeral for General Min Aung Hlaing by smashing saffron-colored clay pots on the ground, symbolic of cutting ties with the dead, in Yangon.¹⁰⁸

25 Apr: Protesters released 748 paper boats in a stream in Lashio (Shan State), dedicated to those who gave their lives during the Spring Revolution.¹⁰⁹

Women continue to lead despite being targeted with violence

On 25 April, the Women’s League of Burma (WLB) estimated that 60% of all protesters are women, with many women joining CDM and helping those in need.¹¹⁰

22 Apr: During the online ASEAN People’s Meeting, Burma activist Khin Sandar announced the junta had caused an estimated 100 women to go missing since 1 February.¹¹¹

2 Apr: WLB condemned the Tatmadaw’s indiscriminate air strikes, and urged an ICC referral for those who committed these war crimes. In a statement, the umbrella of 13 organizations called for the UN Security Council to act immediately to ensure the safety of civilians.¹¹²

8 Apr: WLB hosted an online press conference with ethnic women’s organizations, demanding a global arms embargo, a UN monitoring mission, and an immediate referral of junta leaders to the ICC, in response to both historical human rights violations and the recent fighting in Karen, Kachin, and Shan States.¹¹³

Women have been the target of **sexual and gender-based violence**.

¹⁰³ Newsweek (8 Apr 2021) Myanmar Junta Declares Satellite Dishes Illegal, Seizes Them From Homes and Businesses; Radio Free Asia (12 Apr 2021) Tens of Thousands of Residents Flee Bago in Wake of Assault by Myanmar Security Forces

¹⁰⁴ SAC (26 Apr 2021) State Administration Council Law No 18/2021: Law Amending Television and Video Law

¹⁰⁵ BNI (29 Apr 2021) AAPP declared an unlawful association

¹⁰⁶ Jude Smith (via Facebook) (10 Apr 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10225356858809898&set=a.1420168825681>; Jude Smith (via Facebook) (10 Apr 2021) <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10225356858849899&set=a.1420168825681>

¹⁰⁷ Reuters (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar activists hold ‘blue shirt’ protests; report says junta chief to attend summit

¹⁰⁸ Mizzima (25 Apr 2021) Myanmar protesters smash pots in a mock funeral for the ‘murderer-in-chief’

¹⁰⁹ Hnin Zaw, via Twitter (25 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/hninyadanazaw/status/1386356252813496322>

¹¹⁰ Aljazeera (25 Apr 2021) The women of Myanmar: ‘Our place is in the revolution’

¹¹¹ ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (via Facebook) (22 Apr 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/aseanmp/videos/792966301605507/>

¹¹² Women’s League of Burma (via Facebook) (2 Apr 2021)

<https://www.facebook.com/wlbpower/photos/pcb.4499191630109193/4499191270109229>

¹¹³ Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development (8 Apr 2021) Press Release: Women of Burma/Myanmar Call Immediate Global Action to End Military Rule

On 19 April, activists on Twitter published a screenshot of a military soldier's threatening messages to a local actress. He wrote "I've been masturbating your Facebook pictures. Once we can arrest you, I will rape you as I please."¹¹⁴

On 29 April, the NUG Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs issued a statement condemning the junta's and security forces' violence against women and girls in detention, and calling for accountability.¹¹⁵ From the letter:

"We have received many disturbing reports of women being tortured, verbally and sexually assaulted, severely beaten causing serious injuries, including a case of a woman being raped during an interrogation by the security forces. Some detained women have also reportedly been humiliated in public, forced to dance in the streets to entertain the security forces, while others have been groped and manhandled during arrests. One woman miscarried while in detention as a result of mistreatment."¹¹⁶

The ASEAN meeting: what happened and what it means

Following calls since 1 February, the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting took place on 24 April, at which leaders from the bloc discussed solutions to the current crisis in Burma.¹¹⁷ The day prior to the meeting, the military issued arrest warrants for 26 people, mainly members of the NUG.¹¹⁸

ASEAN invited coup-leader Min Aung Hlaing as the only representative from Burma (i.e., nobody from CRPH or NUG), a move that was seen by critics as legitimizing the coup.¹¹⁹ The awkwardness of the political dynamic was illustrated by Malaysia Ministry of Foreign Affairs' press release, saying the meeting would be "attended by ASEAN Leaders, as well as ASEAN Secretary General, and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing of Myanmar."¹²⁰

On 22 April, NUG Minister for International Cooperation Dr. Sa Sa wrote an open letter to ASEAN leaders to express the willingness of the NUG to join the upcoming ASEAN meeting, and listed conditions that must be met before engaging with the junta.¹²¹ In Yangon and elsewhere, people protested in opposition to ASEAN inviting the junta chief and called for the inclusion of the NUG.¹²²

ASEAN chair Brunei issued a statement following the meeting that included the "Five Points of Consensus" on Burma, namely:

"First, there shall be immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar and all parties shall exercise utmost restraint.

Second, constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people.

Third, a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the Secretary General of ASEAN.

Fourth, ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre.

Fifth, the special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned."¹²³

¹¹⁴ Ro Nay San Lwin (via Twitter) (19 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/nslwin/status/1384183054982279170>

¹¹⁵ NUG Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (29 Apr 2021) Announcement 1/2021

¹¹⁶ NUG Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (29 Apr 2021) Announcement 1/2021

¹¹⁷ Government of Brunei Darussalam (21 Apr 2021) ASEAN to hold the ASEAN leaders' meeting in Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia

¹¹⁸ The Jakarta Post (23 Apr 2021) Junta issues arrest warrants for 26, mostly members of Myanmar parallel government

¹¹⁹ Reuters (21 Apr 2021) Myanmar military says junta leader to join ASEAN summit -Nikkei Asia; Human Rights Watch (21 Apr 2021) ASEAN: Withdraw Invite to Myanmar Junta Leader

¹²⁰ Malaysia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Apr 2021) Press Release: ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on 24 April 2021

¹²¹ National Unity Government (22 Apr 2021) Open Letter from Dr Sasa to ASEAN

¹²² AP (23 Apr 2021) Protest in Yangon ahead of regional summit on Myanmar crisis, Anadolu Agency (20 Apr 2021) ASEAN urged to invite Myanmar unity gov't to summit, RFA (19 Apr 2021) ASEAN Denounced for Inviting Junta Chief to Summit on Myanmar

¹²³ ASEAN (24 Apr 2021) Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting

Reuters reported that the consensus on Burma had been changed to omit a firm call for the release of political detainees, which had been included in earlier drafts and sought by Thailand and Malaysia.¹²⁴

Following the meeting, the SAC issued a press release stating that ASEAN’s suggestions would only be considered after it had restored stability in the country.¹²⁵ The Tatmadaw resumed the use of lethal violence only two days later, shooting dead one man in Mandalay and wounding three others.¹²⁶

Despite the “consensus,” the Tatmadaw dramatically stepped up its indiscriminate air strikes in Karen and Kachin States (see table below), and continued attacking civilians nationwide.

International reactions, sanctions

As of April, the international community seems to have fallen into three main camps. Some states strongly oppose the coup and have ramped up sanctions against the Tatmadaw and Tatmadaw-connected companies. The fence-sitter camp is comprised of states that oppose the coup but are reluctant to take decisive actions, such as supporters of ASEAN’s “consensus” approach, which lacks principles or benchmarks. In the minority are those who take no issue with the coup or the junta (junta, Russia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos).

Multiple UN bodies stressed the need for human rights and democracy, while the UN Security Council remained paralyzed regarding substantive actions. On 1 April, the UN Security Council again expressed deep concern, condemning violence against civilians, and calling for the military to exercise restraint.¹²⁷

On 12 April, the UN Secretary-General’s office emphasized the importance of regional actors, and encouraged all states to use their influence to prevent the escalation of violence while supporting a return to civilian rule.¹²⁸ On 19 April, Secretary General António Guterres urged the UNSC to cooperate with ASEAN to orchestrate a robust international response grounded in a unified regional effort.¹²⁹

In April, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener traveled to Bangkok to meet with Thai authorities, UN officials, and ambassadors accredited to Burma;¹³⁰ upon

More than 61 airstrikes within a week of ASEAN Meeting

Date	Air Strikes: Kachin State	Air Strikes: Karen State	Civilians killed by junta
24 Apr 2021 (ASEAN meeting)	4+	Unknown	3
25 Apr 2021	11+	Unknown	0
26 Apr 2021	11+	Unknown	1
27 Apr 2021	10+	3+	2
28 Apr 2021	3+	6+	2
29 Apr 2021	4+	3+	1
30 Apr 2021	Unknown	6+	Unknown

Sources: Kachinland News (25 Apr 2021) SAC’s fighter jets and attack helicopters bombed Salawng Kawng and Jaw Maw Post; Kachinland News (26 Apr 2021) SAC fighter jets continued bombing on Salawng Kawng; Kachinland News (26 Apr 2021) Ground battles rage as SAC’s fighter jets and attack helicopters bomb Salawng Kawng; Kachinland News (28 Apr 2021) SAC’s airstrikes continue as battles rage around Salawng Kawng; BNI (28 Apr 2021) Burma Army Attacks KIA On Strategic Mountain Base in Kachin State; Kachinland News (28 Apr 2021) Battles rage at Shang Htung Bum; Karen Women’s Organization, via Twitter (28 Apr 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/yfpv3y4w>; Wahkushee Tenner, via Twitter (28 Apr 2021), <https://tinyurl.com/4r7axej6>; Kachinland News (29 Apr 2021) Airstrikes and ground battles continue at Salawng Kawng; Kachinland News (30 Apr 2021) SAC’s fighter jets bomb Salawng Kawng, Jaw Maw Post and KIA’s 25th Battalion positions; Karen Women’s Organization, via Twitter (30 Apr 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/xvsvyd5ux>; Karen Women’s Organization, via Twitter (1 May 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/uptyamse>; AAPP (30 Apr 2021) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup

¹²⁴ Reuters (26 Apr 2021) ASEAN changed Myanmar statement on release of political detainees – sources; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand (26 Apr 2021) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Proposed Way Forward For ASEAN in Addressing the Situation in Myanmar in the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting in Jakarta; The Star (20 Apr 2021) PM to reiterate Malaysia’s stand to end Myanmar violence at Asean meet, says Hisham

¹²⁵ The Global New Light of Myanmar (26 Apr 2021) Press Release on ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting; Bangkok Post (27 Apr 2021) Myanmar’s junta rebuffs Asean plan to end months of violence; Thai PBS World (27 Apr 2021) Stability before ASEAN proposals to be considered — Myanmar junta leader

¹²⁶ Reuters (26 Apr 2021) Man killed in Myanmar two days after regional deal, local media say

¹²⁷ Reliefweb (2 Apr 2021) UN Security Council press statements on Myanmar (1 April 2021) [EN/MY]

¹²⁸ UN (12 Apr 2021) Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

¹²⁹ United Nations Secretary-General (19 Apr 2021) Secretary-General’s remarks to the Security Council - on enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and Subregional Organizations in enhancing confidence building and dialogue in conflict prevention and resolution [as delivered]

¹³⁰ UN (8 Apr 2021) Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

arrival, she received the junta's refusal to receive her in Burma.¹³¹ On 26 April, the UN Secretary-General's office stated that the Special Envoy had ministerial and other meetings at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, and emphasized the importance of timely and comprehensive implementation of ASEAN's five points of consensus.¹³²

On 13 April, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet urged states to take immediate, decisive, and impactful measures to push the junta into halting its repression and violence, comparing the situation to 2011 Syria.¹³³ On 1 April, the UN Human Rights Office for South-East Asia called on states not to return migrants or refugees to Burma due to the grave human rights situation.¹³⁴

On 27 April, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Thomas Andrews wrote an open letter to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, seeking public confirmation that the military would honor commitments made at the ASEAN meeting, including the right of the people of Burma to freely express their views without fear of injury, death, or detention. Andrews also called for an end to violence, the release of detainees, and for access to be granted to the UN Special Envoy.¹³⁵

China continued to assert its position that it will not intervene. On 2 April, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that the international community must foster an enabling environment for political reconciliation in Burma on the basis of non-interference.¹³⁶

On 2 April, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told his Philippines counterpart that China upholds "three supports" and "three avoids concerning the situation in Burma; the three supports are a political settlement through dialogue, ASEAN non-interference, and an ASEAN high level meeting, while the three avoids are civilian casualties, inappropriate UNSC action, and external influences motivated by private gain."¹³⁷ On 6 April, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson repeated these in a press conference.¹³⁸

On 20 April, China State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed to the UNSC the importance of supporting ASEAN efforts towards domestic reconciliation in Burma, and said that de-escalating tensions quickly was in the best interest of both Burma and the international community.¹³⁹

On 2 April, **India** condemned any use of violence in Burma, urged the release of prisoners, and stated support for the restoration of democracy.¹⁴⁰ On 1 April, India deported a 14-year-old Rohingya girl, believed to be a victim of trafficking, to Burma; junta immigration officials refused to accept her.¹⁴¹ Anadolu Agency reported the recent rise in the detention of Rohingya refugees in India.¹⁴² India reportedly detained at least 150 Rohingya in March 2021.¹⁴³

The **UK** continued its opposition to the coup and its support for ASEAN's intervention. On 20 April, a motion tabled in parliament in February—to condemn the coup in Burma and call on the British government to take action against the military junta—reached 100 signatories.¹⁴⁴ On 1 April, the UK contributed GBP £500,000 (around USD 687,650) to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for

¹³¹ Christine Schraner Burgener (via Twitter) (9 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/SchranerBurgen1/status/1380501366485884929>

¹³² United Nations (26 Apr 2021) Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

¹³³ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) (13 Apr 2021) Intensifying widespread, systematic slaughter by Myanmar military must be halted – Bachelet

¹³⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) (1 Apr 2021) NEWS RELEASE – UN Human Rights Office urges suspension of returns to Myanmar

¹³⁵ United Nations Special Rapporteur Thomas Andrews (27 Apr 2021) Letter to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

¹³⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2 Apr 2021) Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on April 2, 2021

¹³⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (3 Apr 2021) Wang Yi Talks about "Three Supports" and "Three Avoids" Concerning the Situation in Myanmar

¹³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (6 Apr 2021) Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian's Regular Press Conference on April 6, 2021

¹³⁹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Kingdom of Thailand (20 Apr 2021) Working in the Same Direction to Build Peace Together

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of External Affairs India (2 Apr 2021) Transcript of Virtual Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson (April 2, 2021)

¹⁴¹ Hindustan Times (1 Apr 2021) Assam tries to deport 14-yr-old Rohingya girl; Myanmar doesn't open border gate

¹⁴² Anadolu Agency (1 Apr 2021) India: Rising detentions spark panic among Rohingya

¹⁴³ Reuters (9 Apr 2021) India's top court paves way for Rohingya deportations to Myanmar

¹⁴⁴ UK Parliament (24 Feb 2021) Political and security situation in Myanmar; Burma Campaign UK (22 Apr 2021) 100 UK MPs call for stronger action against the military in Burma

Myanmar (IIMM),¹⁴⁵ whose mandate includes collecting evidence that could be used to prosecute high-level offenders for international crimes.

On 8 April, Burma's UK embassy was seized by the Tatmadaw after the military attaché locked Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn out of the building.¹⁴⁶ The UK said it received notice from the junta that the ambassador has been removed from his role, and must accept the decision.¹⁴⁷

On 7 April, **Indonesia and the UK** issued a joint statement calling for an end to violence in Burma, restoration of democracy, and the release of detainees.¹⁴⁸ The same day, Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs said the UK will support ASEAN's effort to resolve the crisis in Burma, after a meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.¹⁴⁹

The **US and Japan** continued their opposition to the junta. On 15 April, the US Embassy in Burma issued a statement in response to the assault and abduction of Wai Moe Naing and another demonstrator during a peaceful demonstration in Monywa, calling for the release of detainees and reiterating support for the pro-democracy movement.¹⁵⁰

On 2 April, Japan's Foreign Minister said that Japan strongly condemned the situation in Burma, and maintained communication with the military only in order to urge them to stop the violence, release detainees, and restore the civilian government.¹⁵¹

On 16 April, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga issued a joint statement strongly condemning the coup, committing to continued action towards the cessation of violence and release of detainees, and supporting the return of the civilian government.¹⁵²

Malaysia continued to tread carefully around the political situation. On 7 April, following a meeting involving Malaysia's Ambassador to Burma and a junta minister, the Malaysia Foreign Ministry released a statement explicitly stating "the meeting does not construe a recognition or otherwise of the SAC."¹⁵³ On 19 April, Malaysia's Foreign Minister told the heads of mission from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), that the situation in Burma must be dealt with properly to avoid an influx of Rohingya refugees to Malaysia and other neighboring states.¹⁵⁴

On 21 April, **Australia** diplomat Frances Adamson called the situation in Burma "a security, political and humanitarian crisis that is not only catastrophic for the people of Myanmar but imperils regional stability," and added Australia was trying to support the people of Burma without conferring any legitimacy on the junta.¹⁵⁵

On 24 April, the **EU's** High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy expressed support for ASEAN's "Five-Point Consensus," and called for the immediate release of all political detainees.¹⁵⁶

On 9 April, EU, US, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, and Switzerland ambassadors issued a joint statement calling for an end to violence, the release of political detainees, and the restoration of democracy.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁵ UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (1 Apr 2021) UK announces further sanctions on Myanmar military-linked companies

¹⁴⁶ BBC (8 Apr 2021) Myanmar's UK envoy says military attache has 'occupied' embassy

¹⁴⁷ James Landale (via Twitter) (8 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/BBCJLandale/status/1380057388049436675>

¹⁴⁸ UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (7 Apr 2021) Indonesia-United Kingdom Partnership Forum 2021: joint statement

¹⁴⁹ Reuters (7 Apr 2021) Indonesia says UK backs ASEAN push for Myanmar crisis resolution

¹⁵⁰ U.S. Embassy in Burma (via Twitter) (15 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/USEmbassyBurma/status/1382694227574931465>

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2 Apr 2021) Press Conference by Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu

¹⁵² The White House (16 Apr 2021) U.S.- Japan Joint Leaders' Statement: "U.S. – JAPAN GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA"

¹⁵³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia (7 Apr 2021) The Meeting by the Ambassador of Malaysia to Myanmar at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy of the Republic Union of Myanmar; Reuters (8 Apr 2021) Malaysia defends Myanmar envoy's meeting with junta after backlash

¹⁵⁴ Bernama (19 Apr 2021) Rohingya issue should be dealt properly to avoid further influx of refugees, says Hishammuddin

¹⁵⁵ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia) (21 Apr 2021) Leaders on Asia Address, Asia Society

¹⁵⁶ European Union External Action Service (24 Apr 2021) Myanmar: Statement by High Representative Josep Borrell on the outcome of the ASEAN Summit

¹⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy in Burma (9 Apr 2021) Joint Statement by Ambassadors to Myanmar

As of 27 April, nearly 300 international MPs from all five continents had signed a 22 March statement calling for the release of their colleagues in Burma.¹⁵⁸

Russia continued to support the junta. On 6 April, Russia's Foreign Ministry claimed that sanctions against the military would intensify conflict and increase the likelihood of civil war in Burma.¹⁵⁹ On 10 April, Bradley Murg, of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, said that the attendance of Russia's deputy defense minister at Burma's annual Armed Forces Day parade in Naypyidaw signaled Russia's support for the regime, and that Russia was moving forward with new arms sales to the Tatmadaw.¹⁶⁰ Other experts warn that Russian weapons are being used against civilians.¹⁶¹

Sanctions imposed (or proposed) in April

- 1 Apr:** • The UK placed sanctions on Tatmadaw holding company MEC.¹⁶²
- 5 Apr:** • A South Korea Foreign Ministry Official said the government may impose a travel ban on Burma.¹⁶³
- 8 Apr:** • The US imposed sanctions on Myanmar Gems Enterprise, a state-owned enterprise with military ties.¹⁶⁴
- 19 Apr:** • The EU imposed sanctions on ten additional individuals, along with military conglomerates MEC and MEHL; the measure specifically targeted the economic interests of Burma's military regime and individuals responsible for serious human rights violations.¹⁶⁵
- 21 Apr:** • The US imposed new sanctions on two state-owned businesses, Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE) and Myanmar Pearl Enterprise (MPE). US assets of the businesses will be frozen, and Americans are banned from dealing with these companies.¹⁶⁶ Secretary of State Antony J Blinken said this should send a message to the military that the US will continue to target funding channels, promote accountability for violence, and support the people of Burma in their efforts to reject the coup and restore Burma's path to democracy.¹⁶⁷ Department of State Spokesperson Ned Price said the new US sanctions on Burma state-owned enterprises MTE and MPE will put pressure on the junta, and repeated calls for the cessation of violence, release of detainees, and restoration of democracy.¹⁶⁸
- 22 Apr:** • US Congress members introduced a bipartisan resolution urging the UNSC to immediately impose an arms embargo against the military of Burma, in an effort to end the ongoing coup attempt and return control of the country back to the democratically elected government.¹⁶⁹
- 27 Apr** • US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Blinken received a letter from a bipartisan group of senators, praising existing sanctions against Burma state-owned enterprises and urging that the Tatmadaw be entirely prevented from accessing international resources. The senators also suggested, "Instead of paying MOGE, we propose that joint ventures involving multinational oil and gas companies pay revenue into a trust or protected account which is either held until such time as Burma has a legitimate and democratically elected government or used for humanitarian purposes."¹⁷⁰

¹⁵⁸ ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) (27 Apr 2021) Hundreds of global MPs call for immediate release of Myanmar colleagues, democracy to be restored; ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) (22 Mar 2021) International lawmakers call for the immediate and unconditional release of their Myanmar colleagues, and for democracy to be upheld

¹⁵⁹ Reuters (6 Apr 2021) Russia says Myanmar sanctions could lead to civil war, but EU plans more

¹⁶⁰ VOA News (10 Apr 2021) Russia Seen Advancing SE Asian Ambitions Through Myanmar Generals

¹⁶¹ VOA News (10 Apr 2021) Russia Seen Advancing SE Asian Ambitions Through Myanmar Generals

¹⁶² UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (1 Apr 2021) UK announces further sanctions on Myanmar military-linked companies

¹⁶³ Mizzima (6 Apr 2021) South Korea considering Myanmar travel ban

¹⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State (8 Apr 2021) Imposing Sanctions on Burmese State-Owned Enterprise

¹⁶⁵ Council of the European Union (19 Apr 2021) Myanmar/Burma: EU imposes sanctions on 10 individuals and two military-controlled companies over the February military coup and subsequent repression

¹⁶⁶ Reuters (22 Apr 2021) U.S. imposes new Myanmar sanctions on 2 state-owned businesses

¹⁶⁷ U.S. Department of State (21 Apr 2021) Imposing Sanctions on Two Burmese State-Owned Enterprises

¹⁶⁸ Ned Price (via Twitter) (21 Apr 2021) <https://twitter.com/StateDeptSpox/status/1384901262706102275>

¹⁶⁹ Claudia Tenney (22 Apr 2021) Reps. Tenney and Castro Introduce Bipartisan Resolution to Impose Arms Embargo Against Burmese Military

¹⁷⁰ US Senators Merkley, Rubio, Durbin, Collins, Booker, and Markey (27 Apr 2021) Letter to US Secretary of Treasury Janet Yellen and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

Corporations pick sides

On 1 April, German company Giesecke+Devrient suspended its deliveries of materials used to make Burma's bank notes. The company announced that it would suspend its relationship with the Burma state enterprise Security Print Works, after having already restricted its deliveries several weeks prior.¹⁷¹

On 13 April, US finance company S&P Dow Jones Indices announced removal of India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd from its sustainability index due to its USD 290 million port development project in Yangon on land leased from military-backed Myanmar Economic Corporation.¹⁷²

On 20 April, Estonian payment provider Fortumo announced cancellation of its agreement with the military-backed mobile operator Mytel.¹⁷³

On 19 April, it was reported that Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand were buying corn for their chicken and poultry sector from India instead of Burma, partly due to ongoing unrest in the country.¹⁷⁴

Most large-scale extraction companies have continued activities despite the coup. On 1 April, the Shan Human Rights Foundation called for an end to gold exploration by Australia-led mining company Access Resources Asia in eastern Shan State amidst military atrocities.¹⁷⁵

On 3 April, French oil company Total's CEO wrote an op-ed justifying continued business in Burma. He announced that Total would stop exploration at its A6 site but would continue gas production at Yadana gas field.¹⁷⁶ Total operates Burma's largest offshore gas field, and provides significant revenue to the military regime through Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).¹⁷⁷ On 19 April, local workers from Total E&P Myanmar, working in the Yadana gas field, said they want to join the CDM, but they feared going on strike would draw reprisals from the management, and potentially the military. Natural gas is Burma's second largest export, with close to USD 1 billion earned annually, mainly via MOGE. The workers wanted to cut off one of the military's main sources of revenue. For over two decades, Total has been accused of complicity in the Tatmadaw's human rights abuses.¹⁷⁸

On 16 April, South Korean company POSCO C&C said it would end its joint venture with Tatmadaw-controlled MEHL, but would continue operations by buying out the Tatmadaw's 30% investment stake.¹⁷⁹ On 7 April, the Korean Public Service & Transport Workers' Union and the Korean Metal Workers' Union demanded that the Korean companies POSCO and KOGAS cease all contractual payments connected to their projects in Burma. POSCO operates the Shwe gas field and pays a portion of its revenues to Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).¹⁸⁰ On 26 April, POSCO denied that its gas projects had a direct link with the military. Burma's finance ministry has been under the control of the military since the 1 February power seizure.¹⁸¹

On 23 April, Reuters reported that US oil giant Chevron had lobbied lawmakers and officials to protect its energy interests in Burma, as the Biden administration came under pressure to expand sanctions against the junta. Chevron has a 28.3% stake in the Yadana natural gas field and in the pipeline that carries gas to Thailand.¹⁸² On 17 April, activists in the US Burmese community demanded Chevron

¹⁷¹ Mizzima (1 Apr 2021) German company halts supply of Myanmar bank note components

¹⁷² Reuters (13 Apr 2021) Adani Ports to be removed from S&P index due to business links with Myanmar military

¹⁷³ Reuters (20 Apr 2021) Estonian payment provider says no more links with Myanmar military-backed company

¹⁷⁴ The Hindi Businessline (19 Apr 2021) S-E Asia turns to India for maize on Myanmar unrest, surging freight rates

¹⁷⁵ Shan Human Rights Foundation (1 Apr 2021) Australian-led mining company pushes ahead with large-scale gold exploration in eastern Shan State amidst military atrocities

¹⁷⁶ Le Journal du Dimanche (3 Apr 2021) EXCLUSIF. "Pourquoi Total reste en Birmanie", la tribune de Patrick Pouyanné

¹⁷⁷ Myanmar Now (15 Apr 2021) French oil giant still bankrolling Myanmar junta

¹⁷⁸ New Naratif (19 Apr 2021) In Myanmar, offshore gas workers weigh strikes to cut junta funds; Upstream (17 Mar 2021)

Pressure mounts on oil companies in Myanmar to suspend payments to military junta; Earthrights International (2009) The Human Rights, Environmental, and Financial Impacts of Total and Chevron's Yadana Gas Project in Military Ruled Myanmar (Burma)

¹⁷⁹ Reuters (16 Apr 2021) S. Korea's POSCO C&C says to end Myanmar military-backed joint venture

¹⁸⁰ Mizzima News (7 Apr 2021) Korean unions decry POSCO & KOGAS investments in Myanmar

¹⁸¹ Reuters (26 Apr 2021) South Korean steelmaker POSCO defends Myanmar gas business

¹⁸² Reuters (23 Apr 2021) Chevron lobbies U.S. officials on Myanmar as sanctions pressure rises

stop providing revenue payments to Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), as it is under control of the military junta; and urged the US government and congress to impose sanctions on MOGE.¹⁸³

On 20 April, it was reported that China's metal imports from Burma during the ongoing coup saw a substantial reduction in the nickel-pig iron trade, but a huge increase in copper exports. Burma's two copper projects are operated by China's state-owned Wanbao Mining, with military conglomerate MEHL.¹⁸⁴ According to the Transparency and Accountability Network Kachin (TANK), around 10 rare earth mines—with China as the ultimate destination of materials—had opened recently and were under the control of the Tatmadaw-affiliated armed group New Democratic Army Kachin (NDAK).¹⁸⁵

On 22 April, China state-owned Guangzhou Automobile Group said that plans to begin manufacturing in Yangon for this year had not been affected by the ongoing military coup.¹⁸⁶

Links between foreign companies and the junta continued to be exposed and flagged. On 3 April, Justice for Myanmar revealed that global courier firm DHL was in a joint venture with the Tatmadaw.¹⁸⁷ On 19 April, Justice for Myanmar accused Shangri-La Asia of financing crimes against humanity in Burma and ignoring the recommendations of the UN Fact-Finding Mission that they cut ties with the military. The company continued to do business with the military through its Sule Square development.¹⁸⁸ On 21 April, Justice for Myanmar reported that General Min Aung Hlaing's daughter had substantial business relationships with military-controlled mobile operator Mytel.¹⁸⁹

Domestic actors in Burma attacked the Tatmadaw's holdings. On 1 April, KIA soldiers burned down the warehouse of Yuzana Co Ltd, a crony company associated with former Tatmadaw leader Than Shwe.¹⁹⁰ The same day, in Yangon, unknown actors burned down two MEHL-owned supermarkets.¹⁹¹

Coup continues to destroy Burma's economy

The 1–9am internet shutdown, 8pm–4am curfew, staff walkouts to protest the coup, and ongoing military violence 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.”¹⁹²

According to the Irrawaddy, “Myanmar's banking system has been paralyzed since the coup as hundreds of branches of at least 31 local banks and 13 foreign ones have closed their doors due to staff strikes.”¹⁹³ On 27 April, the Central Bank of Myanmar announced that people should still feel confident about putting their money in the bank; that those who opened accounts from 3 May onward would be able to withdraw cash without limit; but that those who opened accounts before 3 May would be subject to the Bank's prior restrictions that capped ATM withdrawals.¹⁹⁴

On 21 April, the junta announced that the exchange rate had depreciated 20%, to MMK 1,600 to the US dollar, from 1,330 at the end of January.¹⁹⁵ This pushed up the price of imported goods: the price of gasoline jumped more than 20%, with imported foodstuffs also becoming expensive.¹⁹⁶

Domestic boycotts have also had particularly dramatic effects, because Tatmadaw-affiliated companies have such significant market share across sectors. Myanmar Beer, which prior to 1 February accounted

¹⁸³ Mizzima (17 Apr 2021) US firm Chevron under pressure over Myanmar junta involvement

¹⁸⁴ Reuters (20 Apr 2021) China's metal imports from Myanmar show trade contortions amid post-coup protest

¹⁸⁵ The Irrawaddy (26 Apr 2021) Illegal Rare Earth Mines on China Border Multiply Since Myanmar's Coup

¹⁸⁶ Nikkei Asia (22 Apr 2021) Chinese carmaker GAC presses ahead with Myanmar factory plan

¹⁸⁷ Justice for Myanmar (3 Apr 2021) The Junta's Courier

¹⁸⁸ Justice for Myanmar (19 Apr 2021) Shangri-La Asia is financing crimes against humanity in Myanmar

¹⁸⁹ Justice For Myanmar (21 Apr 2021) Dirty Secrets #3: Min aung Hlaing's daughter in secret deal with Mytel

¹⁹⁰ BNI (5 Apr 2021) KIA Torches Yuzana's Buildings in Kachin State

¹⁹¹ Myanmar Now (1 Apr 2021) Two military-owned supermarkets burn down while Yangon is under curfew

¹⁹² Financial Times (25 Feb 2021) Myanmar protests imperil economy as banking slows

¹⁹³ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

¹⁹⁴ Central Bank of Myanmar (27 Apr 2021) Press Release; Straits Times (1 Mar 2021) Myanmar central bank to limit cash withdrawal from banks, ATMs

¹⁹⁵ SAC (21 Apr 2021) USD vs MMK exchange rate rises up to K1,600 per dollar

¹⁹⁶ Nikkei Asia (12 Apr 2021) Myanmar's brewing currency crisis causes consumer prices to soar

for over half the country's beer sales, has seen sales drop by 80-90%, hundreds of millions of dollars in lost profits, and potentially more than USD 1 billion in the company's value, say experts.¹⁹⁷

According to various labor unions, around 200,000—or over a third—of garment industry workers have lost their jobs since 1 February.¹⁹⁸ According to the Construction Workers Union, 300,000–400,000 construction workers have lost their jobs since 1 February.¹⁹⁹

Burma earned USD 4–6 billion from cut-make-pack exports in 2020, but over 80% of the sector has not been operating since 1 February, following deadly crackdowns in industrial areas.²⁰⁰ Prominent foreign retailers have suspended orders from Burma suppliers, including H&M, the world's second-biggest fashion retailer, which had around 45 direct suppliers in Burma for the last seven years.²⁰¹

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, and bankers, among others.²⁰²

By the junta's own account, the value of Burma's maritime trade over the first half (1 Oct–2 Apr) of the current financial year 2020–2021 sank by USD 4.3 billion to USD 10 billion, compared to a year ago; imports fell by USD 2.78 billion to USD 6.116 billion; while exports decreased by USD 1.53 billion; cross-border trade dropped by USD 264 million to USD 5.6 billion; and the country's total external trade was USD 15.78 billion, down from USD 20.36 billion a year ago.²⁰³

On 28 April, Thailand's Commerce Minister announced plans to host urgent trade talks with Burma, after it was announced that the junta planned to prevent soft drinks from being imported via the two countries' land border.²⁰⁴ A move to prevent land border imports may indicate the junta's desire to centralize or otherwise control sectors of a failing economy, as the Tatmadaw did prior to 2011.

The World Bank forecasted that Burma's economy was expected to shrink by 10% in 2021; whereas in October 2020, the World Bank projected growth of 5.9% for this year.²⁰⁵ On 22 April, the World Food Program estimated up to 3.4 billion people in Burma could go hungry this year.²⁰⁶ According to an April 2021 UN report, 48% of Burma's population—or 25 million people—could be living in poverty by 2022.²⁰⁷ This is roughly double the rate from 2017, and is a regression to Burma's 2005 numbers.

¹⁹⁷ Frontier Myanmar (17 Apr 2021) Coup hangover: How Myanmar's national brew went stale overnight

¹⁹⁸ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

¹⁹⁹ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

²⁰⁰ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

²⁰¹ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

²⁰² Frontier Myanmar (12 Mar 2021) 'Nothing is moving': CDM freezes foreign trade, raising fears of shortages

²⁰³ SAC (20 Apr 2021) Maritime trade drops by \$4.3 bln in H1

²⁰⁴ Bangkok Post (28 Apr 2021) Commerce Ministry to hold talks with Myanmar

²⁰⁵ Reuters (26 Mar) Myanmar's economy to contract 10% this year amid turmoil - World Bank

²⁰⁶ The Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) World Food Program Warns of Widespread Hunger in Myanmar

²⁰⁷ CNN (30 Apr 2021) Double crises of coup and Covid could push half of Myanmar's population into poverty, UN warns