



ON-THE-GROUND IN BURMA

A DIGITAL BRIEFER

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MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

- 234 diaspora, CBOs/CSOs, & nonprofit organizations [urged](#) President Biden to implement a coordinated response against the Burmese junta on the Feb 1st coup anniversary.
- 247 CSOs [rejected](#) UN Special Envoy Dr. Noeleen Heyzer’s proposal that those defying the military must negotiate power-sharing as a solution.
- Kirin Holdings announced [withdrawal](#) from joint venture with Burmese junta.
- Burmese junta’s approved transfer of [Telenor](#) sale to Lebanon’s M1 Group and junta-backed Shwe Byain Phyu - putting 18 million civilians’ data at risk.
- Opening of public hearings for the Rohingya genocide case at the [ICJ](#) began on Monday, February 21st.
- On February 21st, the EU enacted a fourth round of [sanctions](#) targeting 22 individuals and 4 entities, including MOGE

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RECOMMENDATIONS

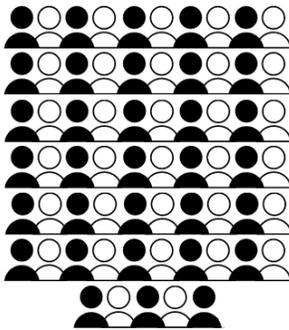
1. Impose immediate targeted sanctions on the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank;
2. Provide immediate cross-border assistance directly to local civil society organizations, particularly those working in ethnic areas and conflict zones;
3. Recognize and engage with the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate government of Burma instead of the illegal military junta;
4. Exert all possible pressure through every available means, including multilateral, regional and bilateral engagement, to ensure that the military allows humanitarian assistance in the impacted areas, immediately stops offensives throughout the country, and unconditionally releases all arbitrarily detained protesters and political prisoners.

ANALYSIS

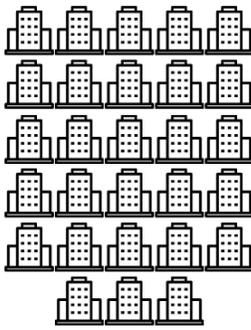
Where does US-Burma policy stand today?

As Burma passes the one-year anniversary of the February 1st coup, where does US-Burma policy stand today? At the onset of the coup, the Biden administration quickly condemned the military junta's takeover of Burma. The US government has adopted 11 rounds of sanctions since February 1st - sanctioning about 93 individuals and entities. While the NDAA passed with amendments specific to Burma, it is not as comprehensive as the BURMA Act, which includes targeted sanctions, essential humanitarian aid, democracy assistance. In order to support the people of Burma and hold the military junta accountable for its crimes, bi-partisan support is needed to ensure the passage of the BURMA Act.

Current Sanctions



65 Individuals



28 Entities



\$1B Frozen Assets



\$220M Humanitarian Aid



\$50M Democracy Assistance



Prohibit Gem
Import



Sanction
MOGE

“

Congress must not wait to provide lifesaving assistance to the people of Myanmar. As the junta's violence has escalated, civilians have faced dire conditions compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and a collapsing financial system.

U.S. Representative Meeks on the immediate passage of the BURMA Act.

”

With the February 1 coup, the Tatmadaw, Burma's military, sought to turn back the clock on the country's nascent democratization. Since then, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners [reports](#) over 12,000 people have been arrested and 1,582 killed. In an atrocity characteristic of the Burmese military, soldiers [burned alive](#) more than 35 people in Karenni State on Christmas Eve. If the power of the Burmese military goes unchecked, they will continue their bloodthirsty campaign against Burmese civilians.



*Burmese military bombed homes in Thantlang, Chin state since September 2021.
Photo cred: The Chinland Post*

A vast web of shady companies affiliated with, or ran by, Burma's generals enable the military's brutal impunity. At the heart of the junta's finances are the wide-ranging businesses of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE). [MEHL](#) covers a swath of industries from household appliances to jade and other gemstones. The institutional shareholders come from every corner of the military apparatus, including "regional commands, divisions, battalions, troops, war veteran associations." Between 1990 and 2011, MEHL paid \$16.6B in dividends to its shareholders. Before the coup, the energy sector was [predicted](#) to earn about \$1.4B in 2022. Sanctioning all military businesses, especially heavyweights like MEHL, MEC, and MOGE, will

constrict the military's ability to abuse its people.

The Biden Administration acted quickly in condemning the military's actions as a coup and imposing targeted sanctions on the top generals, [freezing](#) \$1B in assets in the US. These sanctions include around [65 individuals](#) and [28 entities](#) that range from coup-leader Min Aung Hlaing and his family to other top generals and their cronies. In tandem with the UK, the Administration also [sanctioned](#) MEHL and MEC in March 2021. These steps are crucial in weakening the junta's ability to commit atrocities; however, the US has yet to sanction the MOGE.

The EU [recently sanctioned](#) MOGE, marking the first time the EU has sanctioned Burma's oil and gas sector. Crucially, "it is the first time the EU has imposed sanctions on the Burmese military that were not a direct response to a new atrocity by the Burmese military. This is precedent setting." The US must follow the EU's example by also sanctioning MOGE.



*In January, people demanded sanctions on MOGE in Tanintharyi Region's Launglon Township.
Photo cred: Blood Money Campaign via Myanmar Now*

Up until Chevron [announced](#) its departure in January 2022, the company [lobbied](#) the US government against sanctions on the energy and gas sector because they "might disrupt its operations in Myanmar." While the departure of

Chevron is welcome, the US government should not have relied on the company's voluntary withdrawal. Two other areas that the US has lagged in are teak and precious gem imports. Third party suppliers have ensured that [teak exports](#) to the US remain at pre-coup levels. Similarly, the Indian company, [Vaibhav Global Limited](#), is selling Burmese gemstones through Amazon, Walmart, and Overstock. Sanctioning MOGE and shoring up these other gaps in the sanction regime are an urgent task that the US government must attend to.



Rohingya refugees fled to the Bangladesh border to escape the Burmese military's clearance operations in 2017.

Photograph: Bernat Armangué/AP



Panning for gemstones in Mogok, Mandalay Region.

Photo cred: Ye Aung Thu/AFP

[Congressional efforts](#), like the Burma-related amendments submitted to the National Defense Authorization Act, are a step in the right direction to ensuring a more proactive US approach to Burma. Congresswoman Maxime Waters (D-CA) issued an [amendment](#) to the NDAA intended to prevent International Financial Institutions like the World Bank from lending to the military junta. Senator McConnell (R-KY) added an [amendment](#) which requires certain federal agencies to report how they are promoting democracy in Burma. Senator Edward Markey's continued efforts to seek a [genocide determination](#) in the case of the Rohingya is also an appreciated step forward in US policy.

The next step is for the US Senate to pass the [BURMA Act](#). The BURMA Act would build on these welcomed efforts in a variety of ways. In terms of funding, Congress would authorize \$220M in humanitarian aid (up from \$136M), which is only a [small portion](#) of the amount requested by UNOCHA. The bill also provides \$50M in annual democracy assistance for the next five years. The bill would also expand sanctions on individuals and military-affiliated entities while requiring a report on the cost-benefit analysis of sanctioning MOGE. For the State Department, the bill requires a decision about whether the mass atrocities committed against the Rohingya constitute genocide and the appointment of a sanctions and policy coordinator to foster international and regional responses to the junta.

The BURMA Act is the natural culmination of the Biden Administration and Congress's efforts to hold the Burmese military accountable for its illegal coup and human rights atrocities. It is past time for the US government to take more substantial action on Burma. Accountability is one of the primary keys to end impunity and ensure justice and peace for the people of Burma.

KANYARMAW'S DARKEST MOMENT

The Perspective of Kanyarmaw* from the Karenni National Women's Organization

Over one year into the junta's coup, it feels like the darkest moment in Karenni history. Not only in Karenni State, but also for Burma as a whole. Threats and insecurity are everywhere, affecting us physically, emotionally, and mentally. Our homeland, Karenni State, is being destroyed into ashes. The junta is doing everything they can to destroy us because they are aware that the resistance from the people is so strong. Currently, the Karenni people face the most challenging humanitarian crisis while the decades of human rights and systematic violations continue.



A house destroyed by fire after the Burmese military attacked Loikaw's Maing Lone ward, as seen on January 13.

Photo cred: Progressive Karenni People Force via Myanmar Now

As of January 31, Karenni civil society estimates that over 177,000 people in the townships of Karenni State and the Karenni-populated southern Shan State of Pekhon have been displaced since the start of the coup. There are an estimated 95 makeshift IDP campsites inside Karenni State. 70% of the IDPs are women and children. Additionally, IDPs face many challenges such as a lack of shelter, food shortage (there are no crops and harvest time this year), water shortage (the dry season is coming up), and health issues that

impact us physically and mentally. The lack of educational opportunities also impacts young people and children. Although there are some temporary education centers, not all IDPs have access. Additionally, multiple displacements, which are ongoing, add to the difficulty they face.

Human rights violations and mass atrocities are happening everywhere in Karenni State, including arbitrary arrests, torture, shootings, and killings on sight. The junta continues their indiscriminate attacks on civilians by shelling their homes, using heavy weapons and airstrikes, and targeting religious buildings. Additionally, villagers are being used as human shields. Seventeen villagers in Shwe Pyi Aye, Phekone Township, were used as human shields while closing their eyes and walking in front of junta troops. Humanitarian aid is being looted and set on fire by the junta.

The Christmas Eve Massacre highlighted how the junta is perpetrating crimes against humanity, including war crimes and sexual violence. These are the same crimes committed in cold blood that we've seen over decades. This impunity will continue- accountability and justice is needed immediately.



About 40 Karenni were tied up and burned alive in trucks in Hpruso, Karenni state on Christmas Eve.

Photo cred: KnHRG

The coup impacted everything and destroyed many of the things we built. As a women's organization, we see how women are impacted differently. We had been working to bring justice to the survivors and victims of sexual and gender based violence. We had been trying to build peace within the community, but the attempted coup stopped the little progress we had achieved. We have shifted our focus to humanitarian support, which is the most basic and urgent need for the community right now. Additionally, we also work to make sure the needs of women are voiced.



Fleeing the Burmese military, Karenni IDPs seek refuge in the jungle.

Photo cred: Karenni National Women's Organization

I myself fled to the border in order to avoid the constant fears, threats, and insecurity. We walked through the jungle almost a week while avoiding all the junta military based camps. There are many

people like me fleeing to the border in order to seek protection, but the situation on the border is unfavorable for the displaced. Recent junta offensives on the border have forcibly displaced many subject people to the continuous need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

The military should be abolished and the junta must be held accountable at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for their war crimes and crimes against humanity. The deeply rooted concepts of militarism, patriarchy, racism, and sexism still need to be dismantled in society. The Federal Union should ensure ethnic and gender equality as well as self determination.

The international community needs to support the people's resistance movement that is rising from the grassroots, notably the Civil Disobedience Movement, while acknowledging over seven decades of ethnic armed resistance against the Burma Nationalist military. The coup highlights that the resistance movement is not coming from above but from below. While ensuring humanitarian support reaches those on the ground through local and ethnic grassroots organizations, targeted sections and an arms embargo need to be accomplished. The junta's crimes of ethnic cleansing have gone on for decades. We must put pressure on the international community to take action against the junta's crimes at the ICC and International Court of Justice.

**Name changed to protect writer's identity.*

AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA

CHIN

Artillery shells fired by the military [killed](#) a 13-year-old boy and destroyed several houses in Mindat Township on February 7. The shots were fired indiscriminately in retaliation to attacks from resistance groups. After a commander was severely injured by stepping on a landmine, junta forces [burned](#) an unknown number of houses in Thantlang on February 13. A Burmese military convoy on Mindat-Matupi road fired indiscriminately in retaliation for attacks from resistance groups. Soldiers at checkpoints in Hakha are [cracking down](#) on VPNs, which were banned by the junta's new Cybersecurity Law. Alleged violators are either fined \$28 or taken to detention centers for interrogation. For unknown reasons, five bus passengers in Hakha were [arrested](#) on February 16. The Chinland Defense Joint Committee asked the people to [boycott](#) Chin National Day celebrations organized by the military as part of the fight against the regime. Hakha residents [stayed indoors](#) on Chin National Day in protest.

KACHIN

In early February, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and People's Defense Force (PDF) retaliated against the Burmese junta and [attacked](#) several bases, seizing weaponry and hardware. Continued clashes have led to many fleeing the violence. One specific hotspot has been Momauk Township - civilians from at least three villages [fled](#) their homes to take refuge in churches due to fears of escalating armed conflict. On February 1, the anniversary of the coup, a seven-year-old child was [killed](#) by a policeman due to a bomb attack on a police camp. The child, who was lying in his room, was shot when the bullet permeated the walls and his chest. On February 18, a couple fleeing KIA and Burma Army fighting were [shot dead](#), showing that innocent victims are often those who suffer the most in these battles. Major businessmen in Kachin's jade and gold industry are under much scrutiny due to dishonest [connections](#) with the junta. Targeted sanctions against such companies were recommended in the past, but calls for action will increase in coming days.

KARENNI

More than half of Karenni State's population of 300,000 are currently displaced. Several reports warn that IDPs will face [starvation](#) and, potentially, death in coming months. In early February, the junta [launched](#) artillery at an IDP camp in Demoso Township, killing one person and destroying shelters, homes, and a church. Communication [blackouts](#) across Karenni State grow as battles intensify, impacting effective responses to medical emergencies. [Airstrikes](#) are taking the lives of young children and the elderly alike. Without significant reprisal, the military continues to massacre civilians with recent attacks targeting a [funeral](#). On February 23, two villages in Demoso were [bombed](#), killing three and injuring five, including a 60-year-old woman. Several people have also been found dead, showing [charred](#) remains and signs of cruel [torture](#). The junta's [increasing assault](#) on resistance forces resulted in the death and injury of several civilians.

MON

Mon State continues to be affected largely by arbitrary arrests and killings. The murder of a junta village administrator on February 2 led to the [arrests](#) of over 10 civilians in Ye Township's Ashin village. During the first week of February, a shop owner was [abducted](#) by soldiers in Kyaikto Market. There was a major [COVID outbreak](#) at the start of the month with over 165 cases in the first ten days alone. On February 9, a retired philanthropist was shot and [killed](#) while doing charity work at a clinic. The next day, 9 Hpa-An University students and their driver, who were accused of trying to join the armed resistance movement, were [sentenced](#) to 12 years in prison for incitement and sabotage. A university student allegedly caught with weapons in November was [sentenced](#) to life in prison on February 15. On February 18, the military [seized](#) the properties of a former NLD MP accused of being linked to the NUG.

KAREN

Military operations have long [targeted](#) Karen state through drones, troop deployments, and bombings due to the presence of major armed resistance groups, including the Karen National Union (KNU). This has caused the displacement of around 160,000 people. Mid-February has seen the continuation of [armed clashes](#), especially in the Lay Kay Kaw region. The military has increasingly used artillery and air strikes within battle regions and the junta has set up roadblocks to restrict material movement for resistance groups. Total displacements within the entirety of Burma have now amounted to over 800,000, with Karen state being one of the [leading contributors](#) due to additional hostilities within armed groups. Recently, KNU and PDF soldiers [clashed](#) with junta soldiers on the Thai border. The junta's use of weapons such as mortar guns and artillery resulted in numerous casualties on both sides. On February 17, a junta artillery outpost was [seized](#) by KNLA and resistance forces; deadly artillery shells and weaponry used to harm resistance efforts and innocent civilians were confiscated.

SHAN

Early February marked the continuation of [armed clashes](#) within Shan State. Several armed groups, including the People's Defense Forces (PDF), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) were reported in Muse, Mongkoe, and Kutkai townships. Fighting also escalated in Moby town of Shan State. Northern Shan state villagers were also forced to [flee airstrikes](#) when the military regime attacked the Mon Yaw region with fighter jets. Many stayed to protect property in farms in Lashio township, and, the next day, many were forced to flee there as well. On February 22, southern Shan state saw [clashes](#) between resistance groups; these fights have long existed, but have been exacerbated due to the coup. As of February 24, fighting increased yet again after the junta launched a major attack against resistance groups near Shan State. Mere days ago, fighter jets [bombed resistance groups](#), forcing paratrooper deployment and many casualties on both sides.

RAKHINE

In early February, [growing tension](#) between the Arakan Army and junta forces led to [clashes](#) in Maungdaw Township. Another [clash](#) on February 7 killed two civilians, and residents in the surrounding area continued to hear artillery fire the following day. The junta continues to hand out sentences that infringe on human rights after [arresting](#) civilians and youth for defaming the junta and [supporting](#) the PDF. Many still [remain in jail](#) for alleged connections to the Arakan Army. Instances of internet [blackouts](#) have also taken place in townships across Rakhine. Amidst the unrest and under the military, civil society organizations are unable to [raise funds](#) freely for refugee camps, which remain in squalid conditions. Meanwhile, conditions of detainees continue to be neglected as evidenced by the [passing](#) of a two-year-old girl in prison. She was the daughter of a woman accused of supporting the resistance.

CENTRAL BURMA

Junta forces [burned](#) down at least 800 homes in Sagaing Region's Pale Township on February 3. At least 4 people were murdered while another 100 were arrested. Soldiers took rice, oil, and food supplies while robbing over \$393k worth of cash and gold from two stores. A two-day [siege](#) on the village of Taung Pyin Nge in Ye-U Township killed two elderly civilians on February 8. About 68 people were detained, and soldiers looted every house before leaving. Soldiers shot 15 shells into a Kalay Township village on February 6, injuring five adults and three children. A military column [raided](#) two villages in Kani Township on February 20, burning 13 homes and killing two civilians. Two days later, the military fought the Kani PDF at the villages of Mu Htaw and Ngar Phyat. Thousands fled from the conflict. Five people were [arrested](#) during a crackdown in Monywa on February 22. Two women distributing flyers were rammed into by a car, causing one of them to have a miscarriage.