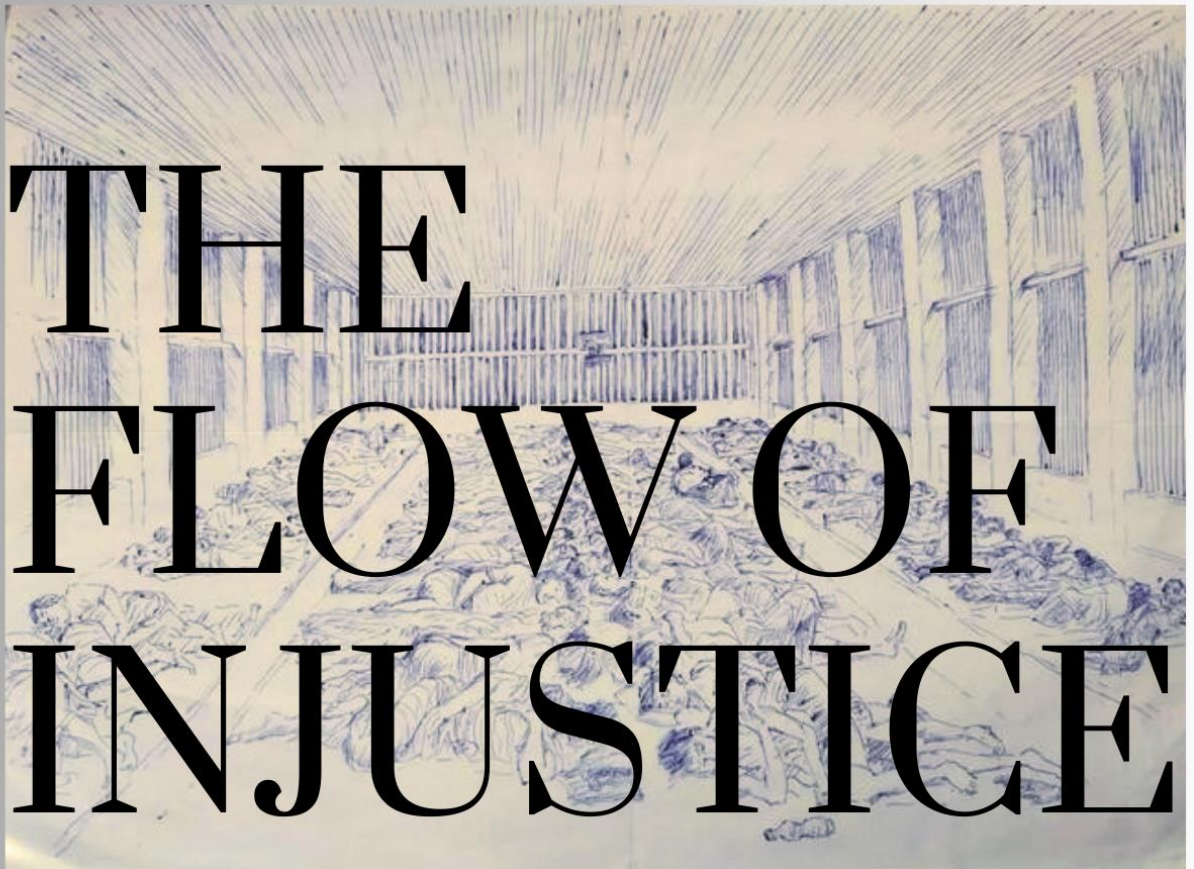


JULY 2023



THE FLOW OF INJUSTICE

Assistance Association for
Political Prisoners

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List of Abbreviations

AAPP	Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CRPH	Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
GSC	General Strike Committee
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IIMM	Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar
NLD	National League for Democracy
NUCC	National Unity Consultative Council
NUG	National Unity Government
PDF	People's Defense Force
SAC	State Administration Council
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

Foreword

The flow of injustice outlined in this report shines a light on the harsh reality political prisoners and their families must endure in Burma.

It describes experiences of suffering and trauma that extend far beyond their time spent in prisons. From the moment of their arrest, they are subjected to evolving hardships, including brutal interrogations of torture and inhumane treatment. Even after their release, the aftermath of this ordeal continues to impact their lives. Political prisoners are left traumatised, but equally affected are their families and loved ones, who bear witness to violent arrests and are left without any information regarding their whereabouts, charges, or physical well-being.

The collateral damage caused by the flow of injustice reaches far wider than the individual political prisoner. Families and loved ones experience profound trauma, as they helplessly scramble to gain information through extortionate measures. The lack of information about their loved ones' fate exacerbates the emotional and psychological toll they endure.

As Nelson Mandela said, who survived hardships not dissimilar to political prisoners in Burma, "No one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens but its lowest ones." This resonates deeply with the plight of the people of Burma, where the *Sit-tat* ruthlessly suppresses any dissent and denies its citizens the fundamental rights and dignity they deserve. The interviews looked at in this report bear witness to the horrors of a regime that is determined to crush the spirit of its own people, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and injustice.

U Tate Naing, AAPP Secretary said "What we are facing today is the worst situation in all known times. In the past, most prisoners at least had a certain degree of safety from death, though there were always also people who were tortured to death during interrogation. However, nowadays the junta frequently takes political prisoners from their cells, to torture, severely injure, and kill. Despite imprisonment, political prisoners must live with concern of when they will get be away for brutal torture. This demonstrates the law has completely ceased to function. There is an urgent need for the world to not sit idly at these extrajudicial acts, and to take immediate action instead"

The international community, including ASEAN and the United Nations, must stand in solidarity with the people of Burma, only by working with them, can we expect to sever the flow of injustice and create a future for Burma where human rights are respected and justice prevails.

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

Executive Summary

This report details the lived experiences of political prisoners in Burma since the military coup on Feb 1, 2021. From arrest to imprisonment, they endure what the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners Burma (AAPP) describes as a “flow of injustice”. Imprisoned due to their active, perceived or supportive roles in the pro-democracy movement, political prisoners in Burma represent the struggle for freedom, human rights, justice and equality.

For two and a half years now, the atrocities committed by the Burma *Sit-Tat*¹ against its own people have been well-documented, with evidence of systematic and widespread violence across the entire country. As of July 7 2023, the *Sit-Tat* have killed (3757) civilians, total arrested (23759) and among them (19389) are still detained in prisons across the country. International institutions such as the United Nation’s Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) have collected a substantial body of evidence on *Sit-Tat*’s atrocities. Nevertheless, a lack of prosecutions means that perpetrators enjoy impunity for their international crimes and human rights abuses, and a protection gap for victims remains.

This new report sheds light on political prisoners’ endurance and details their suffering of abuse along the *Sit-Tat*’s flow of injustice, including within the walls of its illicit interrogation centers, its unfair courts and its abusive prisons. In order to document and study the experiences of the political prisoners, AAPP has conducted in-depth interviews with released political prisoners, documenting their personal experiences from the time of their arrest, their paths to and experiences in prison, and after their eventual release. AAPP also interviewed relatives and other confidants of political prisoners to understand how family members were impacted. The participation of political prisoners in interviews, and their willingness to share first-hand experiences provides a rare insight into *Sit-Tat*’s atrocities in places of detention. Although, the accounts in this report represent only a fraction of the (23759) political prisoners arrested and detained in the notorious *Sit-Tat* prisons and detention centers since the coup, it provides the outside world with rare first-hand accounts of the experiences of political prisoners.

This report is structured around what AAPP calls the flow of injustice, from arrest, to interrogation, to trial, to prison, and then to aftershock:

Arrest: The flow of injustice begins with arrest. In this section, we unpack what happened during these initial hours and days of arbitrary and unwarranted and often incommunicado detention.

Interrogation: All arrestees were interrogated and experienced different forms of abuses, and many experienced physical and psychological torture. The severity of the abuse depended on the profile of the arrested person, as well as who the interrogators were, and where the interrogation occurred. Interrogations took place in police stations, in military interrogation centers, in army battalions, in prisons, and in makeshift interrogation centers set up in public spaces such as schools or stadiums, revealing the *Sit-Tat*’s torturous and inhumane interrogation methods.

Trial: This section reveals the *Sit-Tat*’s weaponization of the country’s judiciary system, to oppress the anti-coup protesters and resistance fighters across the entire country. The political prisoners would first learn of the charges brought against them at their first court appearance, with the trial process mostly occurring in makeshift courts set up inside the prisons. A unique contribution of this report is revealing what happened during trials inside the prisons.

Prison: In the successive military rules in Burma, the *Sit-Tat* used the country’s prison system to oppress political prisoners in inhumane and accumulating ways, including denying adequate food, water, and medical care, as well as using other criminals as *Tanzat*² to impose disciplinary measures on fellow prisoners.

¹*Sit-Tat* refers, hereinafter, to the military and its armed branches that staged the failed coup on February 1, 2021. *Sit-Tat*, or an armed group, is used in this report because the military no longer deserves the prestigious name of *Tatmadaw*, as it has abused its power and abandoned its primary duty to protect the people of Burma.

² A criminal prisoner who is assigned as the disciplinary leader.

This section covers how political prisoners were treated in prisons, and provides details on prison protests, punitive labor and transfers to remote prisons, and the exposure to inadequate food, health and hygiene conditions and extortion.

Aftershock: After being released from prison, political prisoners faced physical and mental health challenges. This section discusses the difficulties of political prisoners after their release, and their attempts to reintegrate back into their communities. The testimonies show how political prisoners are experiencing discrimination against them, with neighbors and friends feeling intimidated by the *Sit-Tat* and not wanting to be associated with them. They also fear rearrest, due to local authorities constantly tracking their activities and whereabouts. Consequently, many are forced to flee and face additional post-migration challenges.

Cross-cutting issues: The report also discusses three cross-cutting issues of political detentions which occur and accumulate across people's experience from arrest to release that have been systematically identified from the interviewees and open-source documents. These cross-cutting issues include;

- i. *The collateral impact on families.*
- ii. *The 'division of labor' among the military, police, judges and prison staff in committing violations and systematic abusive across and throughout the flow of injustice.*
- iii. *Corruption, specifically the extortion of money from victims and their families during the arrest and detainment of political prisoners, and its further collateral impacts on the families.*

Key Recommendations

As elucidated by this report, political prisoners in Burma continue to suffer along the flow of injustice. From the point of arrest, they are subjected to violence, experience torture during interrogation and endure abuse in prisons. Their basic human rights are being denied when they are tried and convicted in a corrupt judiciary system, fully controlled by *Sit-Tat*. The traumatic experiences of political prisoners, and indeed any other victims of *Sit-Tat's* crimes, will have life-long impacts on their mental health, as well as long-term collateral impacts on their family members. With this evidence in mind, AAPP calls on international actors – including, but not limited to, UN Member States, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations – to take immediate and decisive action in pursuit of accountability for *Sit-Tat's* crimes, as well as the immediate release of all political prisoners, and to provide justice and support for the people of Burma. AAPP's recommendations are as follows:

- ❖ AAPP calls on UN and ASEAN Member States to demand the immediate release of all political prisoners including State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint.
- ❖ AAPP calls on ASEAN and UN Member States to provide increased resources for mental health and psychosocial support, as well as other material support and healing process during interim period, for all political prisoners, and for any other survivors and victims; including those still in Burma, those who have fled, and their families and dependents.
- ❖ AAPP calls on international actors to apply political pressure on the *Sit-Tat* to stop its severe torture, leg shackling of detainees during trial, the banning of prison visits, transfers far away from home, movements from one place to another, including to interrogation centers, without notifying relatives, the lack of proper medication, and the killing of political prisoners inside prisons.
- ❖ Any and all efforts by the international community, including UN and ASEAN Member States, to facilitate peace and stability must be predicated on the unilateral release of all persons arbitrarily detained by *Sit-Tat* since February 1, 2021.

Introduction: Flow of Injustice

This report is a follow-up of a previous report titled “Political Prisoners Experience in Interrogation, Judiciary and Incarceration Since Burma’s Illegitimate Coup” issued by AAPP in 2022. This follow-up report scrutinizes the scope of “the flow of injustice”, and investigates what happened to political prisoners from arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, trial and after their eventual release.

Sit-Tat has waged an unlawful and deadly war on the people of Burma for 887 days (as of publication). This Prison Situation Report 2023 hones in on the harms and suffering of those imprisoned by the junta—and, in turn, their families, friends and others who try to support them—as part of its persecutory effort to crush political opposition.

The vast number of people swept into Burma’s prisons since *Sit-tat*’s attempted coup in February 2021 is a testament to the junta’s intent to weaponize the criminal justice system to serve its political agenda. Yet, for the people AAPP has interviewed, the actual period spent in prison is only a fraction of a composite experience of harm that connects and accumulates across a broader set of experiences of capture, brutality, and subjection. In short, imprisonment in post-coup Burma is steeped in multiple episodes of persecution both en route to, and from, prison. *Sit-Tat* is not just imprisoning people, it is ensnaring them in a process of human rights violations aimed at destroying any resistance to their violent assertions of power.

We refer to the process of inflicting harm en route to, in, and from prison, as the flow of injustice.

The flow is comprised of arrest, interrogation, trial, and imprisonment—each constituting human rights violations in its own right and collectively assembling into a larger composite attack on individuals, their families, and on their broader political community. Importantly, the stages of the flow are connected with and reliant on one another—after (1) arbitrary arrest, if the military decided an arrestee had valuable information, they would be sent to an interrogation center, (2) at the interrogation center the military would use torture and abuse to obtain statements that are then (3) used as the basis of the police’s subsequent complaint against that arrestee and the associated trial—which were ubiquitously in violation of the most basic fair trial standards but nevertheless, (4) served as the evidence upon which to issue the longest-possible prison sentences, under broad and vague legislation, in Burma’s squalid prisons..

Survivors—having gone from civilians to detainees, detainees to torture subjects, torture subjects to defendants, defendants to prisoners, and prisoners to surveillance subjects—are traumatized. They are traumatized not only by *Sit-Tat*’s use of prisons as a tool of oppression, but by the mobilization of multiple stages and actors to ensure anyone who challenges its rule is subjected to relentless persecution.

Methodology

The primary victims of the “flow of injustice” are political prisoners. However, the term political prisoner has never been recognized in Burma’s domestic laws. Therefore, respecting and applying international human rights laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), AAPP defines and uses its own definition of “political prisoner” as follows:

A political prisoner is anyone arrested, detained, or imprisoned because of their known active, perceived, or supporting role, or an association with activities promoting democracy, freedom, justice, equality, and human rights, including ethnic rights.

From October 2022 to February 2023, AAPP conducted a series of in-depth interviews with 30 political prisoners, their family members, and others who fled for safety after the failed coup. The former political prisoners were released from various different prisons such as Insein, Myitkyina, Myeik, Hpa-An, Taungoo, Thayet, Thayarwady, either after serving the prison sentence or being released under Section 401. AAPP conducted these interviews between October 2022 and February 2023, and the findings from these interviews are documented in this report. AAPP used its own verification process and procedure to cross-check for the data for accuracy.

Qualitative research methods were used to collect primary data. AAPP conducted both in-person and virtual semi-structured interviews based on context-sensitive interview guidelines developed according to best practice for human rights reporting and documentation. We prioritized the personal security of the interviewees, by applying a strict confidentiality policy and ensuring the omission of each interviewee’s personal identity. The interview team followed ethical standards throughout the interview process, respecting the rights, safety and privacy of the interviewees as the first priority. In this regard, AAPP used a consent form, explaining to each interviewee what the interview is about, where the information provided by the interviewee will be used and their right to freely and voluntarily give, withdraw or deny consent. AAPP only conducted an interview with prior written or oral consent.

AAPP securely stores collected data and intends to utilize the data obtained from interviews and other confidential sources for the purposes of transitional justice, unless the data providers (e.g., the interviewees) request the data to be destroyed.

A limitation of the present research is access to political prisoners. Safe communication is extremely difficult and released political prisoners and others are often reluctant or unwilling to provide formal testimony for fear of rearrest and exposure of their families. The sample size used for this report is consequently modest. Whilst 65% of interviewees were men and 35% of interviewees were women, we have sought to interview both men and women and to include people from different ethnic groups and locations and with different experiences in terms of pathways into and out of the flow of injustice (anti-junta activities, sentencing etc.). All the former prisoners interviewed were arrested in 2021 – the majority in April, May and June. Half of them were released in 2021, the rest were released in 2022 and 2023. In sum, a wide range of experiences and concerns – especially in terms of intersectional harms and discrimination based on gender, age, abilities, ethnic and religious background etc. – cannot be fully accounted for on the basis of the collected data. For this report AAPP has prioritized to collect in-depth, qualitative data to provide key insights into political prisoners’ situation based on first-hand accounts. Yet, the work continues and access to released political prisoners, their families, and others from an increased number of prisons will continue to improve this body of research and AAPPs future reporting.

Arrest

Arrest is the initial step in the flow of injustice, where political prisoners are sucked into *Sit-Tat's* abusive detention machinery. Based on first-hand experiences of such arrests, AAPP has analyzed causes of arrest, the actors involved in the arrests, disproportionate violence at the point of arrest, and the properties seized from the arrestees.

1. Causes, places and persons involved in arrests.

According to the released political prisoners' interviews, the main cause of arrest was due to their political stance and pro-democracy values. Delving further, the causes of arrest were primarily due to participating in peaceful public protests, supporting civil servants who were in non-cooperation with *Sit-Tat* by engaging in the Civil Disobedience Movements (CDM), or joining the underground resistance movements. Moreover, others were detained while escaping to the ethnic armed resistance areas; either in fear of *Sit-Tat's* arrest or seeking military training.

Sit-Tat have raided the homes of pro-democracy targets, and in instances when they could not be found, their family members were arrested and kept as hostages. This emphasizes the collateral damage of the flow of injustice felt by family members and contributes to the wider long-term impacts on the family of political prisoners. The arrests occurred in various locations such as on public streets particularly during the protests, at security checkpoints on roads leading to border areas, and during raids of wanted persons' homes. All the interviewees said that they were arrested without a warrant issued by a court, and they were arrested in different locations including Yangon, Mandalay, Myeik, Kachin, Magway, Kayin, Bago, Mon, and Nay Pyi Taw.

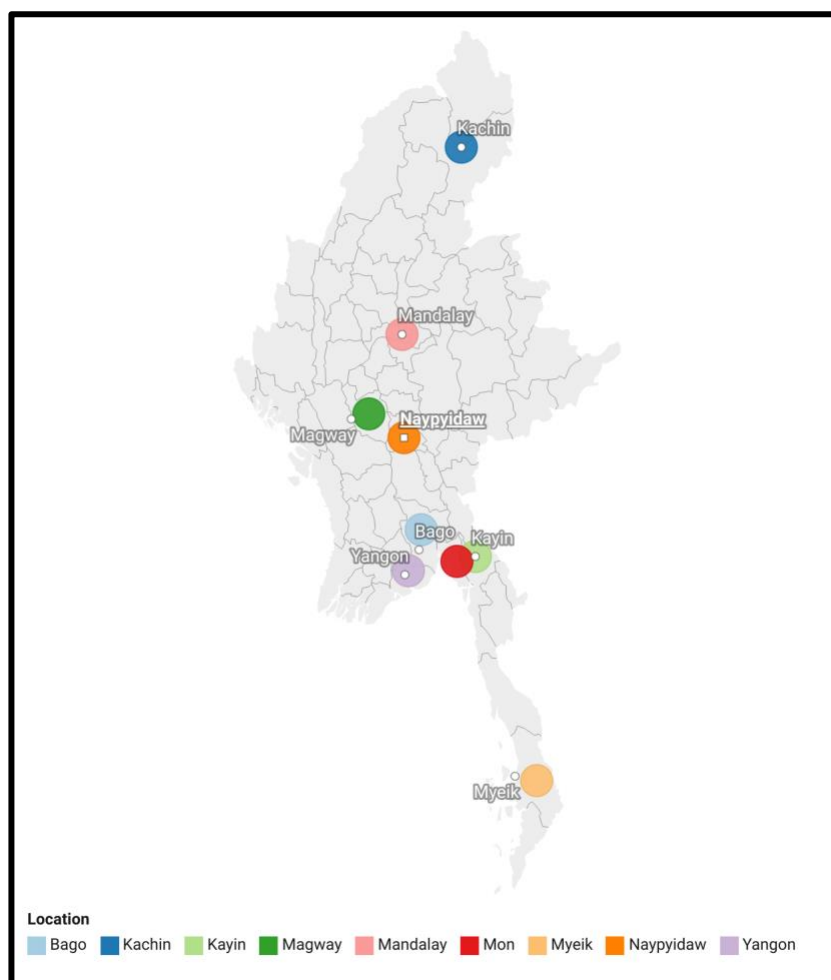


Figure 1. Map of Arrest Locations of Interviewees

Mostly, the arrests were carried out by soldiers and police jointly. In some incidents, people wearing plain clothes were involved in the arrests. In other incidents, due to the amended Ward or Village Tract Administration Law (12/2/21)³ the ward or village administrators participated in the arrests as ‘guides’ to the military using the household registration data to locate the house of the arrestee.

The location and cause of the arrest were often interrelated. For example, those who were arrested on the streets were mostly in connection with their participation in peaceful public protests, while those who were arrested at the highway checkpoints began either with an initial ID card inspection, or with information received in advance by *Sit-Tat* through their informants. Those who were arrested at their homes were evidently the clear targets of *Sit-Tat*, who often used excessive force to violently raid and destroy their homes and threaten and attack household members in the process.

2. Disproportionate violence at the point of the arrest

The flow of injustice begins with the arrest, and it is the starting point of the systematic and institutional persecution devised by *Sit-Tat*, beginning a prolonged period of harm, insecurity and anxiety for the arrestees and their families.

The following cases are specific examples extracted from the interviews of the released political prisoners, who shared how they were mentally and/or physically abused by *Sit-Tat* at the point of the arrest.

At around 9 PM, soldiers broke into our house by breaking down the door of the staircase leading up to our apartment. Around 50 soldiers came into our house, and there were many waiting outside. My husband, our 14-year-old son and I were in the house. The soldiers were from Division 11 of the military, given “Division-11” insignia on their uniform. They were dressed in full uniform and looked like they were ready to fight on the frontlines. They asked my husband’s name, arrested him, and proceeded ‘to rough him up’, kicking him with their military boots. My husband said: “I am a good man, and I will comply without struggle, if you just arrest me normally.” The soldiers cursed at him, however, saying: “What good man? You fuck!”

After the arrest, they searched the whole house, and they managed to find a shirt with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s picture on it. They also found banners used by the youth during the protests, along with the helmet my son used to protect himself from tear gas. They took these items to use as evidence. My son and I were also arrested, and they seized my phone and computer. The soldiers just yelled and threatened all of us and beat our son after asking: “Wasn’t it you that took part in the protests?” My husband was beaten all the way [from the arrest until the police station]. They had no warrant with them when they came to arrest us. As my son was underage, he was released the next morning after the police station commander asked for 500,000 Kyat in exchange.

FPP-002 (Female)

Source: AAPP Documentation Department.

³ The amendments further increase the military’s ability to conduct surveillance on people’s movements, in particular on human rights defenders seeking shelter away from their own homes. Amendments to section 17 of the Act require all overnight guests from other wards or villages to be reported to the ward or village tract administrator, who are authorized by section 13 to “take action” against any who “failed to inform the guest list.” Section 27 reintroduces criminal sanctions for failing to report overnight guests <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/02/myanmar-post-coup-legal-changes-erode-human-rights>

As the suspect of the bomb explosion was in our town, the soldiers, police and some members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) raided our house at around 8 p.m. My father is a National League for Democracy (NLD) MP and a member of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH). The soldiers tried to pin my husband as the main suspect related to the explosion. When they raided my house, they fired their guns into the air. At that time, I was having dinner and a female maid and a male worker were also in my house. They experienced the same torture as well.

During the arrest, they asked whether she was his wife. Then, the soldiers accused her of being a terrorist, and were slapping her in the face and dragged her to the ground by pulling her hair. A soldier stepped on her face, other soldiers beat and kicked her with their military boots, while they shouted all kinds of rude words at her. The soldiers searched and destroyed everything in the house, including wardrobes, refrigerator, glasses, etc., but they did not find anything related to the explosion. The soldiers were all drunk and seemed to be on some sort of drug. The police did not beat us. They arrested all of us without a warrant.

FPP-016 (Female)

Source: AAPP Documentation Department.

On March 2, there was a standoff between the protesters and the joint forces of the soldiers and riot policemen, who were going to use live ammunition to crackdown on the protest. To avoid the bloody crackdown, I tried to persuade the protest leaders to disperse and regroup in another place, while I went to the police officer concerned and negotiated to not shoot the young protesters. There were about 400 soldiers and police. The soldiers were from Division 77, and the riot policemen were from Police Battalion 7. Before shooting, the soldiers said: “You must surrender or be regarded as insurgents undermining the public tranquility, and then we shoot you all”.

Then, they cracked down violently using both rubber and live bullets, and smoke and sound grenade launchers. A soldier struck my thigh with a stick and I fell to the ground, then I was dragged to the roadside and beaten on my head and back. My elbow was broken and my back turned black, while my face was severely swollen and black because the soldiers struck my chin with rifle butts and broke my jaw. My lip and nose were injured and bleeding. It was the soldiers, not the police, who mainly tortured us. The soldiers tied my hands behind my back with rope and brought me to a local police station where a doctor assessed my condition, but he said he could not do anything regarding the broken jaw. A soldier came to me and threatened: “You are getting old, what benefits did you get by leading this group? Are you a Muslim, right? If we were given the authority that we did in Rakhine, Yangon would have been crushed to ash!”

FPP-030 (Female)

Source: AAPP Documentation Department.

3. Properties seized at the point of arrest.

The seizure and destruction of properties by *Sit-Tat* represents an inherent collateral damage to the arrest. During the arrests, soldiers and police seized valuable properties such as money, phones, tablets, watches, cameras, computers, cars, motorbikes, bank books, ID cards, etc. They seized them to use as evidence in the investigation process, while they purposely destroyed other household items. The seizing and destruction of property further highlights the impacts of the flow of injustice on the family members of arrestees and suspects, and the intense level of violence from the point of arrest. Some interviewees said that when they were released, they did not get their valuables back; mostly money and phones, but in some cases ID cards were also not returned, intentionally making everyday life and travel difficult for them upon release. A detailed table⁴ can be found in the annex of this report, in which 16 of the interviewees described having valuables seized by *Sit-Tat* during the arrest.

In sum, political prisoners experience arbitrary arrests which typically and systematically include egregious forms of disproportionate violence, which in some cases may amount to torture or other ill-treatment. Military officers are the main perpetrators of these violations, abetted by the police and other junta officials. In the process, the prisoners' families are routinely harmed and abused – often in targeted ways, when threatened, beaten, and taken hostage – and whole households are subject to unlawful and destructive attacks and seizure of property.

Cross-cutting Theme: Families in Harm's Way

Experiences of vulnerability accumulate across the flow of injustice and can be less visible than the clear human rights violations against individual detainees during arrest, interrogation, trial and imprisonment. However, they can have profound negative impacts on the people involved. Former prisoners express several of such impacts, that we identify as crosscutting themes including the toll imprisonment takes on families.

Families are an indispensable resource for detainees. Families provide money that may mitigate the rights violations against detainees, most notably by bribing police and prison officers to facilitate care (e.g., access to food and medicine) and avoid violence (e.g., in the form of hard labor, inhumane prison conditions, interrogation etc.). Families typically also contact detainees' lawyers and are essential in ensuring legal representation during trial. When prisoners are released, they return to their families to try to heal.

Because of their crucial protective role, families are **directly targeted** by the junta. Spouses, parents, siblings, and children are arbitrarily arrested together with the individual men and women, who the military seeks to detain. When people evade arrest, the military may take family members hostage, and arrest them instead. As family members struggle to protect their detained relatives, they are forced to expose themselves to the junta officials and are threatened, extorted, and abused at every step in the flow of injustice.

The person arrested was my son (...) They seized the house by posting a paper on it, and they locked it with a lock they brought with them (...) That day, the police and soldiers said that [I] can run as much as [I] wanted, but [I] should prepare to die once they catch [me].

HRV-013 (Female)

⁴ Table 1. In the annex.

They called my friend and made him show them my house. My brother was involved in the protests, but not much else outside of them [meaning he did not contribute to organizing protests]. They took him because they could not locate me.

HRV-012 (Male)

As such, detainees' families suffer severe **collateral damage**. Family members are traumatized. Their property is seized. They are subject to surveillance and intimidation – in their homes and neighborhoods – and some lose their livelihoods and become displaced. Anxiety and financial strain pose serious threats to their physical and mental health.

Because of my arrest and detainment, my sisters and the relatives of my wife pressured my wife. They were worried that the junta would seize all their belongings if I kept being involved in politics, so they pressured her to divorce me. So, I signed the divorce paper and left.

FPP-007 (Male)

It is an overarching concern for families to keep in **contact** with their detained relatives. The junta has a long history of withholding information from families, but families struggle hard to know the whereabouts of their detained relatives. Establishing and retaining contact are crucial to channel lifesaving resources and information to detainees. Families and detainees often rely on informal arrangements with police and prison officers, who take bribes to allow access to goods and to pass on messages – also through formal channels of visits and deliveries of letters and food parcels. Visits and deliveries of parcels can also be stopped punitively and discriminatorily against certain political prisoners. During remand detention, families' contact with detainees is typically sparse, but of intense importance. The court process, which offers no opportunity for a fair trial, does however have a tradeoff. Lawyers can call family members as witnesses and generate a possibility for families and detainees to meet.

The junta's targeting of families adds further to the vulnerability of detainees. Released prisoners are often forced to relocate and families are separated. In sum, the arbitrary detention of a political prisoner puts the entire family at risk and in harm's way. Still, families struggle to protect their detained relatives and keep in contact with them at great costs, as they are sucked into the junta's atrocious flow of injustice.

Interrogation

As the flow of injustice continues from the point of arrest, the arrestees are detained and interrogated. Some arrestees are brought to police stations and questioned by the police, but many are brought to the military's infamous interrogation centers. A network of military intelligence units across the country includes detention facilities which serve as torture chambers. When the anti-coup protests and resistance emerged across the country after the failed coup, the *Sit-Tat* also used makeshift interrogation centers in local police stations, inside prisons, in public stadiums or even in schools which they occupied temporarily. In the recent report titled "Towards Accountability: The Urgent Need for Renewed International Attention to *Sit-Tat's* Crimes against Humanity in Burma", AAPP identified 14 types of torture methods used by *Sit-Tat* in these interrogation centers⁵.

1. Places and Perpetrators of interrogation

The released political prisoners interviewed describe military interrogation centers as "a living hell". Military interrogators use torture as a matter of policy⁶ to obtain information, intimidate, coerce, discriminate against, and punish those resisting military rule. In many instances, when the arrestees were involved in the armed resistance against *Sit-Tat*, the risk of being tortured to death is especially high. One of the interviewees that AAPP interviewed experienced such a death by torture of her husband. According to AAPP's data, at least (99) political prisoners have been killed during interrogation since the failed coup⁷, the actual figure is likely much higher.

After the violence in the military interrogation centers, the arrestees are transferred to a local police station, where they wait for their charge. Only at that time did the police start legal procedures, including registering the political prisoners' biodata, and the reason for arrest as part of First Information Report. Although the police stations received detainees directly from the military authorities, they were often unable to immediately inform the arrestees of their charges, because they themselves did not know.

At police stations, officers were mostly interested in extorting money from the arrestees and their family members. They demanded money for allowing family visits, providing drinking water, and delivering food from restaurants outside the police station, or making phone calls to their family. In one case an interviewee, who were sent directly to the police station, also had to pay a bribe to avoid being sent on to an interrogation center, where torture was virtually guaranteed. She also had to pay to get her son released, who had been arbitrarily arrested along with his parents.

2. Tortures Applied during the Interrogation

Torture in the interrogation process occurred completely out of public view, in police custody, military interrogation centers, prisons and makeshift interrogation centers set up in a public stadium or school. The perpetrators and the severity of the torture is only known due to the survivors' testimonies, describing their first-hand experiences.

The following cases exemplify the interviewees' first-hand experiences inside *Sit-Tat's* torture chambers.

⁵ AAPP, Towards Accountability: The Urgent Need for Renewed International Attention to Sit-Tat's Crimes Against Humanity in Burma, 2023 <https://aappb.org/?p=24334>

⁶ AAPP, Page 6 – 7, Political Prisoners Experience in Interrogation, Judiciary, and Incarceration since Burma's Illegitimate Military Coup, 2022, <https://aappb.org/?p=20734>

⁷ AAPP, Killed Database, 2023, <https://airtable.com/shrYUbzQe1hKXQ68x/tblswChRJGSzjWr7k>

I was dragged out of the car, but I could not see anything since we were blindfolded. We were also still handcuffed, with our hands behind our backs. They [military interrogators] made me walk blindly towards [the center], but it was not far. They said: “the ground you are walking on, is where the people who died from interrogation are buried. Don’t you want to get a place for yourself here in the morning? We will make you bite a tin can and make you dig a 3 by 6-foot area in the ground to bury you in”.

They constantly talked about killing me in various ways, such as cutting my forehead open, dropping water drops on my forehead or ramming my forehead into a nail on a tree until I died. At the interrogation center, I was in just my underwear the whole time, as they stripped me of my clothes.

After the interrogation, we were forced to sign a confession that stated we were not tortured during interrogation. They would not let us go, if we did not sign them. After signing the confession, they took a video of me reading my testimony. They assured us that the recordings would not be broadcast on television and threatened us, saying they would not let us go otherwise. They had already written down what they wanted me to say, in advance. So, I ended up reading the script they prepared, under my birth name, as they were recording me.

FPP-004 (Male)

This interviewee is a student activist and a member of the General Strike Committee (GSC), which led anti-coup peaceful protests in major cities. However, his experience in the military interrogation center in an unknown location in Naypyidaw is not an isolated one. AAPP found that other political prisoners shared similar experiences in other interrogation centers located in different regions of the country.

After being arrested, I was put in their vehicle and blindfolded along the way. I was detained at a school which the soldiers used as an interrogation center. I was put in leg stocks and interrogated for seven days. I was not fed for 3-4 days. During the interrogation, they asked me things such as whether I support CRPH or NUG. If I answered no, they hit me with batons and asked me again. When I told them I had nothing to do with them, they poured water on me and tazed me. They all beat me at the same time if I denied something. At least 6-7 people were present in total.

When I could no longer bear it, one of them, a corporal, would put a gun against my temple and say, “Answer correctly. Or we will kill you. There were many political activists before you who were killed during interrogation. Two bus stops away from this place, there is a cemetery. There are a lot of people we buried or cremated without people knowing”.

FPP-007 (Male)

Another example is from Myeik, where locals staged a peaceful protest in March 2021 that was violently cracked down on by the *Sit-Tat*, who fired live rounds at the protesters. FPP-008 received a message about protesters with gunshot wounds, and rushed to the protest site with other colleagues to provide aid. However, more than 50 people, including him and his colleagues, were blocked and arrested by the soldiers. All the arrestees were brought to the Air Force Base, where he not only experienced torture himself but also witnessed an elderly man being brutally tortured. He shared his first-hand experience in the following.

After the arrest, we were taken to an Air Force base. We were kept with our hands tied behind our backs, and they kicked us from behind. I realized when I was struck that they were hitting my buttocks with a metal stick wrapped with a cloth. Some people got a small rock put in their mouths. Some got marbles put in their mouths and got punched in the face. Some of the arrested had bullet wounds [received during the protest] and they were struck regardless.

There was an old man beside me who was around 60 years old, and he was suffering from a hernia. His whole body was shaking when they [the soldiers] made him kneel. Then he passed out when a soldier came and hit him. They proceeded to sling rubber bands at his genitalia while he was passed out because his pants had a hole in them. One soldier stepped on his neck. I genuinely thought he was dead at that point.

FPP-008 (Male)

Sit-Tat uses various methods of torture, including sexual and gendered torture (as exemplified in the case above, where genitals are targeted). Sexual and gendered torture also includes rape, which one of the detainees AAPP interviewed underwent when he was brought to an unknown military interrogation center and refused to expose his contacts.

In the other room, they were questioning a young woman. If I remember correctly, it was about a bank robbery, and it appeared they did not get answers. And since they could also not get answers from me, one of the soldiers said to me that I will have to do the deed [rape] with her [a female detainee]. I was confused, and they turned their attention to me. They pulled my pants down and such. The violence lasted for 45 minutes or an hour. Sexually speaking, I don't think there was only one. I did not see a thing, but there was clearly more than one perpetrator. There was sexual abuse on the floor for probably around 45 minutes, with some breaks for 5 to 10 minutes. They were probably drinking during those breaks, and I think they were soldiers because the soldiers were the ones who brought me there. There were at least three of them, and they also made me grab their genitals.

FPP-009 (Male)

In a final example, a woman shares her first-hand experience of torture, and the trauma of her husband being killed during the interrogation. She was arrested together with her husband who was leading an anti-coup resistance group in Yangon, and her children were kept under house arrest. The arrests were made after an accidental explosion occurred at the group's warehouse in Yangon, and several other members of the group were also arrested. Yet, she neither belonged to the group, nor did she know of the group's activities. She recounts her experience in the following.

They [military intelligence agents] told me to answer the questions correctly or they would kill me. They said my husband was being interrogated along with the young men who were with us. They told me that no one would know about me dying if they shot me with the gun that had a silencer. They noted how I still had children that needed to be looked after so they asked whether I would give answers or die. I said I knew nothing, as I was there [at the warehouse] for the first time and I was just living with my children.

I was made to kneel again. One of them kicked me in my face with a military boot. I was hit in the head with a water bottle for calling them military dogs. The word really hurt them. One of my teeth was chipped when they struck me sideways from behind. After the five people beat me up, the Operations Commander came and said I had to be questioned more and that they might end up killing me. Then, I was asked about the explosive devices. When I answered that I did not know, I was struck in the back with something like a bamboo stick. They put hot

things against my hand, such as fire and heated up metal. I did not put my entire hand on it but just my fingertips. However, my fingertips suffered burns. They hit my knuckles with hard objects. They put my hand between chopsticks or pieces of metal and twisted them against me. I screamed because of the pain.

I was moved to a local police station on October 3. The police station's [Station Commander] told me that my husband had confessed, and I would be detained at [the station] briefly, for around two days. Then I would be released, he said. He continued that my husband would die as they would give him an injection and told me to not spread the news outside. I asked whether it was possible to be treated, to which they said no. I realized later that they moved me to [the police station] because they wanted to kill him. Then, on October 4, the Station Commander informed me of my husband's passing.

I had the choice to cremate him or not. I wanted to see how my husband died, so I chose to cremate him. The Station Commander said I had to sign a pledge if I wanted to bury him. Then, I asked whether I could call my children as I would also want them to see their father for the last time. I was allowed to do so. I saw my dead husband. He looked like he was sleeping, but his face had a lot of injuries. His chest was recently opened as the blood was still fresh. He was wrapped in plastic, naked. I tried to look under the wraps, but they only let me look at his face. They were so cruel. They did not even let him live after confessing.

FPP-011 (Female)

In sum, the flow of injustice pushes political prisoners into the junta's interrogation centers, where they are subject to severe forms of physical and mental torture, including sexual torture and beatings, typically over several days and by a group of attackers led by superior officers. The torture seems to be especially dreadful and deadly towards people, whom the military has targeted and perceive to be in positions of leadership and in association with the armed resistance, organizing protests, or involvement with the NUG. Some political prisoners go directly to police custody for questioning after arrest. Here the violence and torture are less severe as the police officers seem mainly concerned with the extortion of money and focused on processing the unjust cases and fabricated charges according to the military's expectations.

Crosscutting Theme: Division of Roles Between the Military, Police, Judges, and Prison Staff

The flow of injustice is not only defined by different stages, but also different actors. The different steps within the flow of injustice—arrest, interrogation, trial, imprisonment—were operated by different groups of *Sit-Tat* henchmen—police, military, prosecutors, judges, prison staff⁸. Collectively, these disparate actors effectuated the complete flow of injustice, but they were separately responsible for different violations at different stages.

The *military* were the architects of the flow of injustice's logic, the overseers ensuring the flow operated as intended, and direct implementers of certain stages of the flow. They were nearly universally present during arrests, often in large groups, at checkpoints, protest crackdowns or targeted home raids. They decided who was filtered into interrogation centers and exclusively conducted the torture that is synonymous with those centers. They informed the police of the criminal charges detainees should face and instructed the judges to make certain rulings and issue certain sentences. And finally, they on occasion were called into prisons to quash resistance.

⁸ It is important to state that the military, police, judges/judicial officers, and prison staff were not the *only* implementers of the flow of injustice, but they were the most prominent. The interviews also demonstrate that ward administrators and informants play auxiliary perpetrator roles.

I got kicked with soldier boots twice and struck with a rifle butt. And when we got captured, we were grouped on a bridge...They pointed a gun at us and made us shout political chants. They would even put a gun in our mouths...Mainly, soldiers and police were present, and the soldiers were the ones beating us up most of the time...The soldiers beat us more while the police were mostly timid, as they were afraid of the soldiers. They were afraid of their own people.

FPP-006 (Male)

Police typically functioned as supporting actors ensuring that the flow progressed as intended. The police were often present during arrests, albeit in smaller numbers and at times playing a less overtly violent role than the military. While the police in most instances were right alongside military personnel in physically abusing detainees, a few interviewees spoke of instances in which individual officers showed mercy or even actively undermined the junta's persecutory aims. The police were also the main functionaries ensuring that those arrested were also prosecuted and convicted. They were the plaintiffs' pressing charges against detainees, and testified in court about arrests at which they were not present, investigations they did not conduct, and statements they did not hear—all geared to securing the wrongful convictions of those resisting the junta.

[During trial] there were no main witnesses from the military testifying...they just put the responsibility on the police mostly...The police acted as plaintiffs, and they answered “no” whenever they were asked anything about the case[.] They said that the military handed them the case with the basic facts, but that they did not know the rest.

LY020 (Male)

Judges, judicial officers, and clerks worked closely with the military and police, overseeing the judicial system in which charges trumped up by the military were supported by unsubstantiated testimony of police. Judges permitted criminal charges based on vague and overbroad legislation and further rejected requests for bail. They presided over “trials” occurring in makeshift and irregularly constituted “courtrooms”. On the basis of orders from higher ranking or more powerful junta officials, they wholly accepted police testimony and wholly rejected defense witness statements, leading to convictions in all cases. Judges refused bail and issued maximum prison sentences in coordination with the military authorities to ensure the defendant be given that longest prison sentence possible.

After a confession, I asked for a quick sentence to avoid additional charges if the process was drawn out. But the judge told me not to expect much as she and other judges were told to hand out the highest sentences from the higher-ups. She said that in Ayeyarwady region, Shan State, and such, the highest punishment would be two years in prison, but they were told to hand out the harshest sentences in Yangon region.

LY-021 (Male)

Prison staff oversaw and facilitated nearly universally squalid conditions of detention, marked by pronounced overcrowding, and inadequate medical care. Indeed, far more than having a passive role in ensuring political prisoners languished in detention, prison staff also took part in direct abuses in the forms of financial exploitation and physical violence.

I only learned when I was released that there were many instances of the prison staff extorting money from family members outside. It got worse, to the point where they would lie to my family that I had suffered a stroke inside the prison and asked for 200,000 kyats for medical treatment.

FPP-017

Trial

In this section, the first-hand accounts from the AAPP interviews are used to highlight how *Sit-Tat* have structured the judiciary system. Through amended laws, unfair trials and harsh prison sentences, *Sit-Tat* are creating a system to completely oppress the anti-coup protestors and supporters. Political prisoners continue to suffer along the flow of injustice, from the point of arrest to interrogation and then to trial. The injustices continue in the judiciary system, where political prisoners face military tribunals or civilian courts set up within the prison compound in undue processes and unfair trials. Fair trials consist, among other things, of an independent judge to preside over a case, the ability of the accused to introduce exonerating evidence, and the exclusion of torture-related evidence and/or evidence relating to the occurrence of torture. During a fair trial, defendants are permitted access to legal counsel and resources for their defense, and witnesses can be directly and cross examined. These key fair trial elements are absent in the current post-coup judiciary system.

The civilian courts have become a mechanism to cover up *Sit-Tat*'s criminal actions such as torture during interrogation, and illegal property seizures, while denying civilians their basic rights and democratic freedoms enshrined and protected by the international laws. *Sit-Tat* have amended laws to enable the judiciary system to suppress dissenting opinions, for example the Penal Code Articles 499-502 that criminalizes defamation, which is in clear deviation of international standards⁹. Additionally, amendments and reorganization of the Counter-Terrorism Law loosely defines the notion of “terrorist” and includes activities which are lawful in international democratic standards. Such amendments to Burma’s legislation allow *Sit-Tat* to continue perpetrating injustices against the population, and further trap political prisoners along the flow of injustice.

1. Types of courts, chaos and remand

According to experiences of the released political prisoners interviewed by AAPP, after being tortured and interrogated for several days, they were brought to the local courts of the townships where they were arrested. They were charged either with Penal Code Section 505, Section 17 (1) of Unlawful Association Act, Section 50 of Counter-Terrorism Law, Section 19 (A) of Weapon Act, and were given the first remand. Only then were they informed of the charges being brought against them. In some cases, the arrestees were directly sent to prison where they appeared for the first time in a makeshift court inside the prison to get the remand. Depending partly on how the military intelligence handled the case, the arrestees could be transferred back to the local police station of the township where they arrested or transferred directly to the prison.

In the case of FPP-004, he and two other colleagues were transferred to Yangon from Naypyidaw, where the local police station refused to accept their cases because they were originally arrested in Naypyidaw, outside their jurisdiction area. FPP-004 shared how he and two other friends were again brought to a trial court in Yangon, and described a chaotic system where they were repeatedly denied by police stations and prisons in the following:

On April 22, three of us were moved to Yangon [from Naypyidaw]. Initially, we were sent to Eastern District Police Station in Yangon, but they did not accept us because they had not arrested us. The Western District Police Station did not take us in, too. So, they called Insein Prison to send us there, but Insein Prison denied us, too. Subsequently, they tried Kyauktada Police Station, which denied us for the same reason [that the case didn't occur in their jurisdiction area and they didn't arrest them]. Finally, we were taken to [Yangon] Hluttaw compound, where the Yangon Region Police Headquarters were located, and we had to wait until 9:30 pm. We got the order to be moved again around 9:30 pm. Since we were tried at Nay Pyi Taw, Nay Pyi Taw sent an order letter stating Kyauktada Township

⁹ Human Rights Watch, 2021 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/02/myanmar-post-coup-legal-changes-erode-human-rights>

Court would have to accept us. On April 23, I had a hearing at Kyauktada Court. I was given a remand by the judge, to be detained for another 14 days. The judge said I would be sent to Insein Prison.

FPP-004 (Male)

Sit-Tat uses District court as ‘trial courts’, where district courts have original jurisdiction over the case if the alleged criminal act occurred in its jurisdiction area. Post-interrogation, the political prisoner is transferred to a police station in the township where they were first arrested, or in some cases directly to a prison. Thereafter, the police will begin handling the procedures for trial. However, according to interviews and data collected, a greater number of actual court processes are being held in “special courts”, a makeshift court set up inside the prisons, not in the district courts.

After the failed coup, martial law was declared in the townships where there were strong anti-coup protests and resistance, and the number of townships was extended to (46) as of February 2023. In these martial law townships political prisoners are brought directly to trial processes at military tribunals. The trials are brief, with their rights to a lawyer being denied. This was the main difference between the military tribunals and the civilian “special courts”, which were set up inside prisons or prison compounds, originally by using COVID-19 restrictions as an excuse. In these special courts, arrestees were granted access to lawyers to defend their cases. However, the civilian courts are also still fully controlled by *Sit-Tat* and therefore have had no fair trials.

2. Access to lawyers

Injustices continue for political prisoners, particularly with their right to legal representation. According to the interviews of the released political prisoners, they had access to lawyers only after they were brought to the courts. The judge asked them whether they wanted to hire a lawyer or not (with the exception of two detainees who were brought to the military tribunal and denied any access to lawyers). Appearances in court provided detainees with an opportunity to contact their families, with whom the detainees were denied any communication with since the first day of their arrest. The detainees were able to bribe the police or prison guards to contact their families, and inform them of their location, but only after they were transferred back to their place of detention – local police stations or prisons.

When families received a call from an unknown number and were informed of where their loved ones were detained, then they had to urgently find a lawyer to defend the case in court. If the arrestees were detained at the police station, the families got a chance to briefly meet their loved ones in police custody. If the arrestees were sent directly to prison, the family members were denied any visits to them. In this case, they had to gather information on what the charges were and the upcoming court date, so that they could urgently find a lawyer to start applying for the power of attorney on behalf of the prisoners. The process of locating detained loved ones and trying to arrange legal representation and protection is profoundly distressing and traumatizes family members for merely being associated with indicted and incarcerated individuals, further exacerbating the collateral impacts of the flow of injustice.

On the first day of the trial court, the released political prisoners said that they were not given access to their own casefiles, however their lawyers were allowed to copy the files and keep them in their hands. Most of the interviewees said that they could briefly discuss their cases with their legal representatives and seek legal advice before each court process started. Political prisoners recounted their judicial experiences and the continuous surveillance and interruption by the military authorities, of their conversations and engagement with their lawyers. They witnessed the consequences imposed on their lawyers for representing political prisoners, with many being threatened by the security personnel to quit their job.

Since the failed coup on February 1, 2021, human rights lawyers have become *Sit-Tat's* targets due to their legal assistance and support of political prisoners and their families. *Sit-Tat* attempted to intimidate and threatened to arrest human rights lawyers who dared to provide legal service to any political cases. According to the data gathered by AAPP as of June 2023, there have been (54) lawyers (31 males and 23 females) arrested since the failed coup in 2021 and (40) lawyers still remain in detention, while (9) lawyers were sentenced to prison and (14) lawyers have been released. In some cases, lawyers were even arrested in front of the court immediately after they defend a political client¹⁰. This emphasizes the collateral impacts of the flow of injustice, demonstrating how lawyer's lives are impacted by defending political prisoners.

3. Court Process

The released political prisoners from Insein Prison in Yangon described the “Special Court” in three different buildings, namely Dhammayone, Training Center and Stadium, within the compound of Insein Prison. HRV-13 is the mother of a youth who was arrested and detained at Insein. By recalling what her sister shared with her about her son's trial, she described the courts inside Insein Prison as follows:

The court was a big hall partitioned with plastic screens. All [of the prisoners] could enter. It was a large hall so it could be divided, with one side of the hall being for Mayangone and the other side for Mingalartaungnyunt Township or Ahlone.

HRV-013 (Female)

HRV-13's description of the makeshift courts inside Insein Prison correlates with the other interviews. Political prisoners described the dependence on their lawyers to not only provide legal assistance, but also to act as a point of contact between them and their family members. During the court process, family members weren't allowed to enter the prison and meet the political prisoners. Therefore, the lawyers had to play the intermediary role by bringing food and letters from the families to the political prisoners and feeding them before their trials.

The released political prisoners described cases where the plaintiff police officers had no recollection of either the witnesses that they brought to court, or the defendants themselves, and in some cases, they could not remember either. Due to the large number of trials, plaintiffs could not remember the specific cases or the charges and would have to read out from a piece of paper. One interviewee described an instance during a court hearing, where a plaintiff blatantly answered that they did not know or remember anything about the case when questioned by the defendant's lawyer. When asked whether they were even present during the arrest, they confirmed that they were not there. When asked whether they were present during the interrogation, they also confirmed they were not there. They were just following the orders from above and they knew nothing about the case. This highlights the complete lack of fair trials, where no matter how fabricated or poorly presented, judges universally convict defendants held under political charges.

Obo Prison, similar to Insein Prison, has a special court set up inside the prison. Moreover, according to first-hand experiences in Mandalay, what happened during the court process in Obo Prison was identical to Insein Prison. Lawyers were threatened by the military authorities, and defendants only had the opportunity to meet with them for a few minutes before their trial. The plaintiffs at Obo Prison trials also answered that they knew nothing about the case and the defendant, stating that the military had handled the cases. Nevertheless, all trials ended with convictions by the judges.

Political prisoner defendant's lawyers tried to prove their clients' innocence by using clear evidence, and pointing out that the plaintiff's evidence was not in line with the Burma Evidence Act. However, the

¹⁰ <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/11926/>

judges at both Insein and Obo Prisons disregard or refuse to admit exculpatory evidence a loss. Sentences tend to increase if lawyers attempt to dispute the charges against their client or the decisions of the judge.

Political prisoners from other prisons such as Myeik and Hpa-An also shared their first-hand experiences. At one point, the plaintiff police even threatened them in front of the judge that they can even add more charges if they wished. In another court process, the plaintiff admitted that he did not know anything about the case, but he came to testify there because of the order that he received from his superior.

At the court, the plaintiff testified that they had taken photos of us with the weapons. He threatened us [three defendants] that we were charged with just Section 505 and 145, but no charges related to the weapons, and that they could just [add] the charge for the weapons, if they wanted to. I felt like I could no longer trust the justice system of Burma.

FPP-006 (Male)

My lawyer was able to question the witnesses that the prosecution presented. The regional police officer who testified as a witness said he testified what he was told by the higher-ups and he knew nothing about it.

FPP-007 (Male)

Some testified they were arrested at home. Some of them would be sleeping at home, sick at home, or drinking alcohol in front of the house. Some people were arrested while they were going out to pay the electricity bills. Out of more than fifty people arrested, actual activists participating in the protest were just around 10 people. But all were sentenced with the same charges.

FPP-008 (Male)

I experienced discrimination such as when we tried to make an important point to the judge at the hearing, the judge would either pretend they did not hear it or make a joke about it and move on. They tried to do things like that to ignore or deflect the statements we wanted to make.

FPP-010 (Male)

In short, Burma's judiciary system post-coup has regressed to a system of undue and unfair trials. As stated in Section 6 of the Burma Evidence Act¹¹, if the plaintiff brought out witnesses whose testimony was hearsay, the case would be deemed invalid. Yet, the post-coup courts allowed such witnesses to testify, based on hearsay, and the court took records of their testimony and the defendants were eventually convicted. Such are the challenges that defendants face during the trials. Lawyers were not permitted to challenge the plaintiffs and were continuously warned by the judges, blocking them from adequately defending their clients. The consistent interference with lawyer/defendant communications adds to the injustice, and creates further damaging impacts for the political prisoner on trial.

Cross-cutting Theme: Corruption in the Flow of Injustice

The policemen, the judges, and the prison authorities involved in the flow of injustice can mostly be seen as perpetrators who extort money. These cases of corruption happened mostly either in police custody or in prison. The perpetrators exploited families under immense anxiety and stress, and took advantage of the situation. They extorted money for various reasons, such as getting information on political prisoners' location, providing brief visitation in police custody, sending food and water to them in prison or even in exchange for the release of the political detainees and family members who were taken as hostages.

Township police station commanders and judges play an important role in receiving the families' appeals for pardon, and process them using their signature and approval. However, we have found that they abuse

¹¹ Section 6, Burma Evidence Act, http://www.myanmar-law-library.org/IMG/pdf/2015-12-24-law_amending_the_myanmar_evidence_act-73-bu.pdf

this power to extort large amounts of money from relatives. Moreover, during arrest, the junta-military and police have threatened to seize the families' properties, whilst later extorting money in exchange for not seizing said properties. Among the interviews conducted by AAPP for this report, at least six political prisoners and family members were forced to pay large sums of money in exchange for their release, or for not seizing their properties.

FPP-02 was arrested together with her husband and 14-year-old son. The next morning, her parents found out about her family being arrested and detained in police custody, and went there to pay a bribe to the Police Station Commander for releasing their underage grandson. The bribe cost them around 500,000 MMK. During the time that FPP-02 was facing trial with the charge of Section 501 (A) for six months, she was released because her family spent some money, hoping to get a pardon. As far as I know, we [my family] had to pay around 4,000,000 Kyats to the Police Station Commander, whose signature was necessary to get a release from the judge.

FPP-002 (Female)

HRV-012's brother was arrested as a hostage and put into police custody because he was not found at the time. They did not find any evidence after interrogating his brother for five days, but threatened the family saying they would charge him with Section 505(A). Then, a senior clerk at the police station acting as a middleman came to extort 1,000,000 Kyats from his family in exchange for releasing his brother. When his brother was released, he was released from the back door of the police station without anyone's notice. It is believed the money was shared among the Station Commander and others.

HRV-012 (Male)

FPP-016 was a businesswoman running a drinking water factory in her town, but her father was a member of parliament from the NLD, and her husband was also involved in the Township's politics. The joint junta-military and police forces came to arrest her husband as a suspect of the bomb explosion in the town, but her husband was not at home. Therefore, a factory worker, a housekeeper and FPP-016 who were all present in the home, were arrested as 25 hostages. Later, the police station threatened to seize the factory, and extorted 5,000,000 Kyats from her factory manager. She had to pay the money to protect her business and the workers.

FPP-016 (Female)

He spent nearly six months in prison. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, family visits were prohibited, and his family could not contact him even through letters. Therefore, he had to use prison guards to contact his family and send letters through them. Each time, his family had to pay 20,000 or 30,000 Kyats for their service. Also, the police officer who was responsible to bring his case to the court contacted his wife and extorted 500,000 Kyats from her, saying that he could help release her husband. In total, his wife had to spend 3,000,000 Kyats during this six-month period.

FPP-007 (Male)

Source: AAPP Documentation Department.

In addition to these explicit examples of corruption, most interviewees describe entrenched and routinised petty corruption in most interactions with police and prison officers. This is of course not something new in Burma's criminal justice system. Yet the entrenched and abusive corruption, coupled with the enhanced vulnerability of political prisoners and their families after the failed coup have compounding effects on the harm and suffering to which they are exposed.

Prison

Political prisoners' experiences during arrest, interrogation, and remand and trial amount to a wide range of serious human rights violations. Yet, it is only a fraction of the political prisoners' overall time detained in the flow of injustice compared with prolonged and difficult periods they languish and suffer in prison.

The prisons in Burma have long been known for oppressing political prisoners who in turn have showed their defiance against the prison authorities in various forms of prison protest. However, prison conditions improved somewhat during the last decades - especially during the political transition in 2010 to 2020 - in terms of nutrition, health and hygiene as international organization such as International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were allowed to visit and help improve conditions, for instance by building proper toilets. Education and vocational training programmes were also introduced, which had previously been prohibited under the military rule, as the generals not only wanted to detain political activists but also intended to destroy their future. Since the failed coup, prisons have reverted back to the old ways.

1. Food

Most prisoners – both political and ordinary prisoners – received three meals per day. Rice was the main food that all the prisoners relied on for their survival, however the quality was extremely poor, as it contained grass and gravel.

Prisoners either relied on food sent by their families, or ordered and paid for food items from the staff, paying double the actual price of outside items. For purchasing food and other items, the prisons used a system called “Zay Bar” that is a profitable business for the prison. The families of political prisoners would deposit cash in a Zay Bar by registering the name of their loved one with their specific prison ID numbers and ward. Then, the prisoners who have their cash deposit in the prison’s Zay Bar could use it to order items such as shampoo, soap, coffee, snacks, etc. from the permitted list of items. The Zay Bar officer then goes shopping once a week to buy what the prisoners ordered and sell back at double the price.

Separate from this formalized system, other prison staff were also selling items themselves, even though such transactions are technically prohibited according to the prison rules. Through this channel, prisoners would order food and items that they could not get through the Zay Bar, however they would pay four times the original amount. An extract from one interview describes the systems as follows.

For example, if we want to eat fried noodles, we would have to order it discretely, with a secret payment. The price of fried noodles would be 2,000 Kyats outside but would be 5,000-6,000 Kyats in the prison. If our families back home sent 100,000 Kyats to us through the Insein Prison staff, we would only receive 80,000 Kyats in our hands and we had to pay the prison guard at least 20,000 Kyats for his service of smuggling money into the prison illegally.

FPP-018 (Female)

Even though the unofficial channel of paying officers directly is riskier than the Zay Bar, in terms of breaking the prison rules and being more expensive, it is the most preferable method among the political prisoners for a number of reasons. Firstly, when the prisoners were suddenly transferred to other prisons without being informed in advance, they instantly lost their cash deposits in the Zay Bar. Secondly, the prisoners could hold and manage their cash in their own hands, and were able to buy items that they could not access via the Zay Bar. The prison guards smuggled and sold these items directly to the prisoners for their own profits. However, if the prison authorities found cash in the possession of political prisoners, not only did they seize it, but they also could severely punish them for breaking prison rules. In the past,

from the experience of political prisoners following the 1988 uprising, if prison staff who smuggled such money, food and other items into the prison illegally were discovered by their superiors, no action was taken against them. Their superiors also received a share of the profits as a bribe and turned a blind eye to their staff's illegal activities in prison. If they took action, it only resulted in transferring the prison guard to other duty positions.

2. Health and Hygiene

The healthcare system in Burma's prisons is notoriously in chronically bad condition. Political prisoners interviewed by AAPP tell that when they were sick and went to the prison clinic, they just receive *burmeton*, *cevit* and *paracetamol* tablets, no matter what the medical issue was. This implies that there is a general disregard or lack of concern for the health of prisoners. All health conditions, urgent, mild, and in between were met with the same nominal response of administering generic pain killers or fever reducers. During the waves outbreaks of COVID-19, the prisoners living in crowded prison cells were left to fend for themselves in highly infectious environments. A released political prisoner from Insein Prison shared his experience in the following.

Everyone in the ward [where the number of prisoners were kept twice higher than it could accommodate] lost their sense of smell during that period [of COVID-19]. The warden officer said there was nothing to be worried about and this was just a normal loss of smell. He gave us an onion to eat, and if one onion was not enough, we should eat two or three onions until our sense of smell was recovered. The infection rate was that if there were four wards, prisoners from all four wards lost their sense of smell. Yet we were all still kept together.

FPP-007 (Male)

The released political prisoners told AAPP that they witnessed some of their inmates die in prison because they did not receive medical treatment in time. A female political prisoner said that the health system in the prison failed another female prisoner in her ward who died as a result of not receiving urgent medical treatment due to a delay in reporting her condition and have to seek prison authorities' permission at each step. Regarding the healthcare conditions in Insein Prison, she said:

Whenever we got sick; in our ward, they would not send you to the prison hospital right away, instead they just did things like measuring their body temperature or blood pressure. Someone even died of illness in the ward. Honestly, there was no one with actual medical knowledge. The so-called medical staff were actually appointed by the prisoners, who were then trained by other prisoners. Only nurses were present at the prison hospital, instead of doctors, and there was nothing for emergency medical treatment.

FPP-030 (Female)

Generally, the hygiene condition in prison varies among the different prisons, or even within the prison. However, the sharp rise of the political prisoner population in 2021 not only exacerbated overcrowding but had domino effects on insufficient water for personal hygiene, access to clean drinking water; high rate of infectious diseases such as skin diseases, and diarrhea, and a significant reduction of food both in terms of quality and quantity; and the already crippled healthcare services. These compounded issues emphasize *Sit-Tat's* disregard for prisoners' health and wellbeing. This was of course only exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, where Burma's prisons quickly became epicenters of the virus. Until now, there has not been any credible data regarding the number of prisoners who were infected with COVID-19 and did not receive proper medical treatment in prison.

A female political prisoner interviewed by AAPP shared her first-hand experience by describing in detail the infrastructural condition of the female wards inside Insein Prison, that caused persistent hygiene problems on a daily basis:

I lived in Detention Ward No. 2 [in Insein Prison] until I was released, and it was in an old ward where we could neither see anything outside nor even enjoy fresh air because it has no windows. It was intentionally very crowded. There were only two rooms there and each room would house over 200 prisoners [in total, there were over 500 prisoners in the ward]. I was not sure how large the room was, but it also had little attics, so people would stay up there too. So, the main concern regarding health was the lack of water. The [concrete] water pond was so small for 500 prisoners that every morning, we had to rush to bathe and wash clothes. If you were late, there would be no more water.

The room that I lived in with other 200 more prisoners had only two toilets, but only one of them was usable. The other room had 2 toilets, too. There were ten toilets outside the rooms, but we were not allowed to use them when the rooms were closed after the assembly and at night. Every morning, we had to wait in line for the toilet in our room. If you woke up late, you would have to wait for a long time. The toilet was also putrid, which they did not fix even though we asked them to.

The prison gave a plastic cup, a small soup bar and a blanket [only for those who do not have it and took it back when they got a blanket sent by their families.] If possible, we would order two blankets from home; one for covering ourselves and another to be used as a makeshift pillow. [As for female prisoners,] we had to buy other hygiene products ourselves and had to order our own menstrual pads from home. We would get some items if a donor from outside came by.

FPP-018 (Female)

A male political prisoner released from Insein Prison also shared his first-hand experience of the hygiene condition in prison as follows:

The ward that I lived in was 40 by 80 feet in width. Normally, the room could accommodate around 400 people, but they put almost 800 people in it. When the time came to sleep at night, you can only sleep on your sides and could not lie on your back. Those prisoners who were able to pay money to Tanzi or the prisoners-in-charge would be placed against the walls which is much better than those who could not afford to pay and had to sleep in crammed rows in the middle of the room.

The room was very hot at noon time as the roof was covered with zinc roof tiles. The ventilation was poor, and it was hard to breathe inside the room crammed with 800 people. Moreover, we got sick since we inhaled the excrement fumes from the toilet inside the room. The flooring was stone tiles, so people suffered aches on their body, strokes, colds, or pneumonia because they had to sleep on it. There was a long, small concrete water pond for bathing. But there were over 2,000-3,000 people from all the four wards, and everyone had to bathe along the side of the pond where we had to line up and take baths in groups. There was no water properly prepared for personal hygiene.

FPP-007 (Male)

3. Prison Protests

Prison conditions deteriorated rapidly after the failed coup as *Sit-Tat* turned these facilities into places of physical and mental torture for political opponents. In defiance of their oppression the political prisoners have staged several protests in the prisons across the country.

According to the open-source data including media reports collected by AAPP between February 2022 and March 2023, there have been at least 37 prison protests in 12 prisons across the country. The political prisoners in Insein Prison staged 11 prison protests during that period, accompanied by 6 protests in Patheingyi Prison, 4 protests each in Obo and Hpa-An prisons, 3 protests each in Dawei and Monywa prisons, and one protest in each of the following prisons: Kalay, Pyaw, Pakokku, Paypon, Kyaikmaraw and Yemethin. The causes of the prison protests vary, some were staged on politically significant days such as the coup anniversary or Union Day in solidarity with the anti-coup political movements outside the prisons.

A significant number of protests occurred in direct response to gross violations. When political prisoners Ko Kyaw Min Yu (aka Ko Jimmy), Ko Phyo Zeyar Thaw, Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw were executed in Insein Prison, protests broke out in several prisons across the country, including Insein¹². In some cases, the prison protests began because of an individual conflict between a singular political prisoner and the prison authorities and/or *Tanzil*¹³, which led to other political prisoners standing with their ally, and protest in defiance against the prison's oppression. There were also incidents of political prisoners attempting to escape prison, leading to the subsequent oppression against other political prisoners in the prison¹⁴. In some cases, the prison authorities labelled prison protests as "prison riots", to justify their use of excessive force and lethal weapons to crackdown on the protesters. Medical care was then restricted, and some political prisoners died from their injuries due to being denied urgent medical attention following the crackdown¹⁵. The following are excerpts detailing prison protests with violent responses by the junta in different prisons.

According to a *Sit-Tat* press release, around 50 detainees led by one named Van Dan (aka Salai Shalon Shan Htan Hlyan) held three prison authorities as hostage while trying to escape from Kalay Prison on the evening of March 15. The prison authorities used lethal weapons to shoot them, causing the death of seven detainees including Van Dan, and injured 12 other detainees. The seven killed prisoners were: Van Dan, Nyut Win Aung (aka Myo Win Aung), Chan Min Ko, Tuu Khine, Win Ko Naing, Myo Min Htun and Maung Nyi. The junta regime claimed that security aimed to shoot at the lower part of the bodies, but according to the photo evidence, the detainees were shot dead in their heads and abdomens. The prisoner's bodies were sent to Kalay General Hospital, and the junta did not contact or return the bodies to their family members. According to the views of the community in Kalay, *Sit-Tat's* claim of an attempted prison escape is unlikely, given the fact that there are several military battalions surrounding Kalay Prison. Instead, they believe that a prison protest occurred among political prisoners, and the prison authorities used excessive force and lethal weapons to crackdown.

Kalay Prison, Sagaing Region

March 15, 2022

The Irrawaddy, RFA, Mizzima

The prison authorities used lethal weapons and opened fire after the political prisoners were chanting a slogan in Monywa Prison on April 3. One prisoner named Thant Zin Aung was shot dead and five others were injured. They were shackled and a one-foot-long steel rod was attached

¹² Khit Thit Media, June 17, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/khitthitnews/photos/a.386800725090613/1522816768155664/>

¹³ Khit Thit Media, March 9, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/khitthitnews/photos/a.386800725090613/1443836362720372/>

¹⁴ RFA Burmese, October 19, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/rfaburmese/photos/a.10150522560153128/10162110188818128/>

¹⁵ Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, November 15, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/mmpressphoto/photos/a.874378089269886/837063169297784/>

to the iron ring on their ankles, making it difficult for them to walk. After the shooting by the prison authorities, about 20 political prisoners were transferred to solitary confinement and beaten by warden Zaw Zaw Aung. Access to the prison was also closed. After the prison strike, the prison authorities transferred 150 political prisoners to Myingyan and Obo prisons.

Monywa Prison, Sagaing Region

April 3, 2022

[REA](#) , [Mizzima](#) , [The Irrawaddy](#) , [DVB](#)

In the early morning of 8 May, the prison authorities in Taungkalay Prison suddenly and violently tried to transfer 66 political prisoners, 50 of them male and 16 of them female, to Kyaikmaraw Prison. Prisoners protested and began singing a revolutionary song, and fellow political prisoners joined in by banging pots and pans. The prison authorities beat them with batons, rifle butts and slingshots. Four political prisoners, Nay Lin Htun, Lwin Moe Htet, Khant Thi Lwin and Moe Min Htet were beaten, handcuffed, and dragged away. It was reported that 17 political prisoners, both male and female, who participated in the protest were kept in solitary confinement, and their food and water supply was cut off.

On 6 June 2022, the prison authorities arranged to move political prisoners from one ward to another to stay with criminal prisoners. The political prisoners began to protest, and it was reported the prison authorities used lethal weapons to shoot at the political prisoners, while also using slingshots and bamboo sticks to beat them. Two political prisoners were shot and around 60 others were injured.

Taungkalay Prison, Hpa-An, Karen State

May 8, 2022 & June 6, 2022

[The Irrawaddy](#) , [REA](#) , [Khit Thit Media](#)

4. Prison Transfer

Sit-Tat intentionally transfers political prisoners to other prisons far away from their families. It affects both the prisoners and their families who struggle with visits across long distances, adding to the mental anguish experienced by political prisoners. While the number of political prisoners has been rapidly rising in a prison, the prison authorities used transfers to disperse political prisoners to other prisons, as a means of maintaining control and discipline over them. Transfers are a standard prison management tool, but it can be used punitively – also within a prison by shifting political prisoners into general wards with ordinary prisoners.

There have been several prison transfers in 2022, but not all were reported in the media as the military intended to keep the operations opaque. Based on open-source data, AAPP was able to document at least five major prison transfers between April 2022 and March 2023, shown in the table below.

Table 1: Incidents of transferring political prisoners to other prisons across the country

Date of transfer	Prison of origin	No. of transferred political prisoners				Prison transferred
		Male	Female	Unknown	Total	
Apr 7, 2022	Monywa	130	20		150	Obo & Myingyan
Apr 24, 2022	Insein	100	30		130	Thayarwady and Kyaikmaraw

THE FLOW OF INJUSTICE

May 8, 2022	Hpa-An			66	66	Kyaikmaraw
Jul 9, 2022	Hpa-An			40	40	Unknown prison
Oct, 17, 2022	Monywa			70	70	Obo, Myingyan and Thayet
Total		230	50	176	456	

Source: AAPP Documentation Department

5. Forced Labor

Another way to punish prisoners is to expose them to punitive and humiliating labor. FPP_NOV_004 describes the intimidating and derogatory language used by prison officers; “you have all been sentenced and this prison has to detain you. Therefore, the prison owns you”. These are the words used repeatedly by authorities at Insein Prison, while they force political prisoners to carry out hard labor.

This manual labor often included tasks that were intensely physically demanding such as working vegetation farms, removing weeds, or carrying bricks and rice bags. Other tasks were highly unsanitary due to the conditions of the prison, including digging holes to dispose of excrement; and cleaning toilets and bathing areas. Whilst *Tanzi* extorted money from the political prisoners in exchange for being exempt from such work.

In Myeik Prison, the prison authorities made a business deal with a local company, and used the forced labor of prisoners to produce false eyelashes. Moreover, the prison authorities used the forced labor of prisoners to build a new prison ward; despite having secured the budget for hiring laborers outsourced. AAPP interviewed three political prisoners released from Myeik Prison and they all shared accounts of political prisoners being used as forced labor. One of the them shared his experience in the following.

A ward called Building 5 was under construction when we got to the prison. What I learned was that there was a budget for hiring the workers. However, they forced prisoners to work on the construction, instead of hiring workers. Another thing was producing the fake eyelashes. I have a pre-existing medical condition and since I had not received my medicines yet, I asked them to delay my involvement. But they denied it and forced me produce fake eyelashes. So, I had to make fake eyelashes. Because of my birth condition, I need breaks while doing them, so it took about over a week. *Tanzi* said that he would stop forcing me to do it if I paid 150,000 Kyats a day during that week.

When I reported this to the prison authorities, they said we were made to do these things to teach us. The prison authorities stood with *Tanzi* as their own people. Being forced to make 10 fake eyelashes is not an easy thing. A fake eyelash is very small, and it is made from human hair. So, we had to focus a lot while doing them. One prisoner did not finish producing 10 eyelashes per day, but finished just six lashes. In this case, the prisoner had to do the remaining four lashes the next day, meaning that he had to finish 14 fake eyelashes the next day. Because of these things, some prisoners ran their heads into the brick walls.

FPP-008 (Male)

6. The *Tanzi* Disciplinary System

The prison authorities’ systematic oppression against political prisoners is in practice often implemented by other prisoners called *Tanzi*’s, who are appointed by the staff as disciplinary persons in every ward. *Tanzi* are given the authority to assign other prisoners to do hard labor and to distribute sleeping places and food and it is an important position in prisons as *Tanzis* run many of the daily functioning’s inside the prison. The prison authorities also use the *Tanzi* as disciplinary persons to govern and punish the other

prisoners on a daily basis. Enjoying such authority, the *Tanzis* imposes discipline and extort money from prisoners using intimidation and harassment from a detainee's first day, where the *Tanzis* are giving every new arrival *Pon Zan*¹⁶ or other disciplinary methods to show obedience. Then, *Tanzis* use the extorted money to bribe prison authorities to retain their position, hence *Tanzis* and prison authorities mutually cooperate and benefit from the extortion.

If you cannot pay, you cannot get enough space to sleep in the crowded wards in Insein Prison. Occasionally, prison protests or fights erupt between political prisoners and the *Tanzis* due to this oppression and ill-treatment. A mother who was interviewed by AAPP for this report and whose son was sentenced to a long-term imprisonment in Insein Prison said:

My son had to sleep curled up in the prison. He said in the letters that it was problematic to sleep because it was crowded. To live like a human being, you have to pay money in prison

HRV-013

In sum, imprisonment is the stage of the flow of injustice in which political prisoners are condemned to languish in maliciously squalid and grossly overcrowded prison conditions. Adequate food and medical care are so poor or wholly absent that entire market places are created to extort prisoners and their families. Prisoners are transferred far and wide, isolating them from their survival networks, and forced to work or otherwise carry out humiliating and putative tasks. When prisoners collectively organize to protest these conditions, they are met with excessive and brutal violence.

¹⁶ *Pon Zan* are submissive sitting and standing positions that prisoners are ordered to take to show deference. *Pon Zan* dates back to colonial times and are used in Burmese prisons today. *Pon Zan* is instructed - often violently - to new prisoners by the *Tanzis*.

Aftershock: Personal Security as a Primary Concern

The last stage of the flow of injustice is the aftershock political prisoners suffer once they are released from prison. After having been subjected to months and years of persistent persecution, physical and psychological violence and neglect, political prisoners in Burma are left traumatized. Arguably the central purpose of the flow of injustice is to so severely traumatize members of the political opposition movement that they are rendered unwilling or unable to continue pursue their political goals. Moreover, political prisoners continue to face risks even after they have been released from prison.

All released political prisoners interviewed by AAPP said that they felt under surveillance when they returned home following release. Some said that they did not return to their own home due to this insecurity, and instead hid at a relative's home for the first days or weeks post-release. This situation of insecurity was exacerbated by *Sit-Tat's* re-arrests of political prisoners immediately following release with another charge, before they even got back home at the gates of prison, or within days of being home. The primary concern of the released political prisoners interviewed by AAPP is that they do not want to be arrested again, eventually seeing no choice but to flee.

I knew I was under watch after my release, and hence I got into trouble again. The ward chairman said I should not stay here any longer.

FPP-030 (Female)

Sit-Tat oppression against released political prisoners further impacts other civilians who are not associated with political acts. One released political prisoner best portrayed it in the following:

I tried to erase my tracks and lay low after getting released. I think they received intelligence about my activities, when I again get involved in politics and they raided the house I had rented previously. During the raid, they looked for me and my brother, but they arrested the whole other family (a husband and wife and their two sons) renting and staying there at the time. The landowner called me and said other people got into trouble, because of my family's actions.

FPP-004 (Male)

Some said that it was also difficult to find a job given their political background, while other youth activists could not continue their formal education after being released. Some released political prisoners had their own family shops before they were arrested, but their customers were scared to be associated with them and stopped purchasing from them.

My family also suffered mental trauma. Socioeconomically, since I was a former political prisoner, people were afraid to communicate with my family, and thus they were also ostracized along with me. As a result, people stopped using our business services.

FPP-010

The experiences of political prisoners, and indeed any other survivors of *Sit Tat's* crimes, will no doubt have long lasting impacts on their physical and mental health. From the violence experienced at the point of arrest, to the torture suffered during interrogation, and then the abuse endured within prisons, political

prisoners are left traumatized. This trauma has a rippling effect, that impacts the family members of political prisoners. They are often left in the dark about their loved one's location and the charges being brought against them, and are constantly concerned for their safety in detainment. The corruption within the judiciary system leaves little space for hope, as desperate family members pay extortionate sums in attempts to provide support in a system that is rigged against them.

After release, political prisoners are left to grapple with not only the trauma of what they have endured, but also the direct impacts their detainment has had on their families and livelihoods. The constant surveillance and fear of rearrest forces many to migrate to neighboring countries, which adds another layer to their mental anguish. Although they may be living in safer circumstances, the post-migration stressors are still prominent, with political prisoners continuing to suffer psychologically.

However, despite the setbacks of trauma and its aftershocks, the people of Burma have remained strong and resilient. It must be acknowledged that the Spring Revolution, unlike previous coups, has brought the people of Burma to a unified front against a single enemy - *Sit-Tat*. The NUG has received the collective strength and support of the entire ethnic population, with armed revolutionary groups working together for the first time. They are fighting together for the establishment of a country for all people of different religions and ethnicities living in Burma, with the revolutionary spirit being ignited on the first day of the coup, as mass protests erupted across the country. The terror executed by *Sit-Tat* against the entire population has further motivated and united the people of Burma in their fight for democracy.

Conclusion

As a follow up to AAPP's 2022 report titled "Political Prisoners Experience in Interrogation, Judiciary and Incarceration Since Burma's Illegitimate Coup", this updated prison situation report details a rapidly deteriorating system. Targeted because of their active, supportive or associated pro-democracy role, political prisoners suffer human rights violations committed by *Sit-Tat*, at each stage of the flow of injustice. Political prisoners experience violence and abuse at the point of arrest, during interrogation, during transfers and within prison. The judiciary system is entirely controlled by *Sit-Tat*, resulting in consistently unfair trials and convictions of political prisoners. The poor living conditions in prisons adds to the struggles of political prisoners, as well as the unofficial operating systems. Prisons in Burma are functioning through methods of extortion and illegitimate markets, with the *Sit-Tat* using *Tanzis* to ensure discipline, and Zay Bars to generate income.

The evidence provided in this report documents first-hand experiences of released political prisoners. The report provides an insight into the violence and human rights abuses committed by *Sit-Tat* against Burma's citizens, and the collateral impacts felt by family members and lawyers. The evidence provided maintains what was previously known, the Burma's *Sit-Tat* grossly violates international human rights laws and are perpetrating a widespread system of violence. AAPP calls on international actors to show their moral obligation by standing up against injustice in Burma and taking action to ensure justice against the perpetrators—*Sit-Tat* and its leaders.

Since its inception, AAPP has kept fighting and hoping for a day that there are no more political prisoners in Burma; and that due to their beliefs in freedom, justice, equality and human rights, there is no longer a need for the organization to exist. AAPP has been steadfastly committed to bringing transitional justice to the people of Burma, hoping that a vicious circle of legal impunity enjoyed by *Sit-Tat* and its leaders must end once and for all, and there must be no recurrence of injustice committed by any armed groups in this country. AAPP believes that the people of Burma, just like people in the free world, deserve to live with human dignity and freedom.

Annex

Table 1: List of properties seized at the point of arrest

Code Name	Gender	Regions & States	Seized Cash & Properties	Properties Returned
FPP-01	M	Kachin	Car, phone	Car returned
FPP-02	F	Yangon	Computer, phone	Returned
FPP-03	F	Karen	Gold jewelries and phone	Returned
FPP-04	M	1 st time – Yangon	300,000 Kyat and a perfume bottle worth of 250,000 Kyat	No return
		2 nd time – Naypyidaw	1,300,000 Kyat, two phones and clothes	Two phones
FPP-05	M	Tanintharyi	Phone, watch and 10,000 Kyat	No return
FPP-06	M	Tanintharyi	Two phones	No return
FPP-07	M	Yangon	A video camera and three phones	No return
FPP-08	M	Tanintharyi	Phone and motorbike	No return
FPP-09	M	Yangon	Phone	No return
FPP-10	M	Karen	More than 200,000 Kyat, Phone, watch, ATM card, bank book	Phone
HRV-11	F	Yangon	Car, two laptop, I-pad, phone	Phone
HRV-12	M	Tanintharyi	Nothing seized	
HRV-13	F	Yangon	Not available	
FPP-14	M	Kachin	Phone, ID card and some money	Phone, ID card returned
FPP-15	M	Kachin	Phone, ID card and some money	Phone, ID card returned
FPP-16	F	Bago	Two cars and one motorbike	Returned in exchange with 5 million Kyat
FPP-17	M	Magway	Nothing seized	
FPP-18	F	Yangon	Phone and ATM card	ATM card returned
FPP-29	F	Yangon	Two phones, one tablet, passport, gold jewelries, bank books and more than 8 million Kyat	Passport, gold jewelries and bank books returned
FPP-30	F	Yangon	Not available	

Source: AAPP Documentation Department