

Ultranationalism:
Military's attempts to the
State Control



NYAN LYNN THIT ANALYTICA

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Contents

Preface	3
Methodology	4
1. Introduction	5
2. The attempt to divide Kachin and Shanni based on ethnic and religious identity	7
3. The attempt to divide Karenni and Pa-O based on ethnic and religious identity	13
4. The divide-and-rule tactic	17
5. What is really behind the pro-military militia movement?	19
5.1 State religion and pro-military militia	20
5.2 Political parties, nationalism and militia	21
6. The Junta's election and its political parties	29
7. Conclusion	33
References	36

Preface

Myanmar encountered a long history of religious and ethnic conflicts, and oppression on ethnic groups that are not Burmese. It requires a close monitoring and careful approach to prevent those conflicts and oppression from repeatedly occurring. Myanmar's military had used various tactics for ages to sustain their power and interests. Manipulating the diversity and different identities of religions and race/ethnicity towards their own scheme is one of the tactics of the military regime. They have been enticing the support from extreme nationalists through their narratives such as to sustain and preserve Buddhism, and to follow the bestowed three main duties - non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of the national solidarity, and perpetuation of sovereignty. Meanwhile, the extreme nationalist groups have been indirectly supporting the military's vicious endeavor to sustain their power in disguise as political parties, Pyithusits (counter-revolutionary militia groups) and military-propaganda media.

It is observed that in Myanmar's spring revolution, the Military used divide-and-rule tactics on different religious and ethnic groups by inflicting conflict among them to curtail the power of revolutionary forces. The Military Junta has always endeavored to hold off the Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) from reinforcing the spring revolution movement through invitations to meetings and alluring EROs with lucrative interests. There were also cases where the Military conducted negotiation meetings for peace and ceasefire agreement with international mediation. This report will discuss and describe

- (1) the military's manipulation of religious and ethnic identities for their power and interests
- (2) the military's endeavors to control and balance the power of revolutionary forces with interest-based concessions and negotiation meetings
- (3) the correlation between pro-military supporters, organizers of pro-military rallies and campaigns, political parties backed by the Military, ultranationalists, religious extremists and local militias formed and supported by the Military, and;
- (4) the Military's schemes on elections and their supporter political parties that are based on extreme nationalism and religion.

Methodology

The report is written by reviewing the data accumulated from the news of free and independent media, official statements from organizations, and from pro-military Telegram channels and Facebook pages and accounts of pro-military supporters and those who spread propaganda.

1 Introduction

For ages, Myanmar military has been executing their mission of factionalizing the diverse groups in the country by inciting the identity difference on ethnicity and religion, and by coaxing some of the diverse groups with their concession deals. On the record of history, the Military had met and negotiated with each EROs separately and persuaded some to become their allies by giving the territories to rule and some benefits. On the other hand, they had been successful in transforming some EROs into Border Guard Forces (BGFs) and recruiting as militia-Pyithusit. In 2021, the Junta's newly formed National Solidarity Peacemaking Negotiation Committee – NSP-NC met some EROs to make negotiations. In 2022, Min Aung Hlaing, attempted to meet and appeal to each ERO separately. However, only some accepted to attend the meeting. The Junta also strived to strike a negotiation deal with some EROs with the international support as the mediation body. In addition, there are also cases where the Military used the respective religious organizations to strike a peace and ceasefire accord with the EROs.

It is reflected that during the spring revolution, the Military has been attempting endlessly to arouse the delicate ethnic and religious identity differences between different ethnic groups and EROs, to create the turmoil within the groups. Besides, the pro-military media channels and social media pages have been releasing propaganda contents to create the conflict between various religious and ethnic groups. On the other side, the Military tried to weaken the growing military strength of People Defense Forces (PDFs) in Sagaing by plotting to separate the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), that is the key supporters of PDFs in Sagaing and Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA). At the same time, with the aim to overpower the expanding Karenni revolutionary forces, the Military has been trying to divide Karenni and Pa-O by creating a conflict based on ethnicity and religion.

In addition, it is observed that pro-military supporters and ultranationalists gathered to form the counter-revolutionary militias such as “Pyu Saw Htee” and “Thway Thout” (blood-sworn), and many other militia groups (called Pyithusit) were formed with the arms and ammunitions support from the military. Such groups were formed based on the narratives that “to prevent race and country from being extinct, and for perpetuation of religion, revolutionary groups, their supporters, media that write about the atrocity of the military, and respective family members ought to be slaughtered for vengeance”. It is also realized from the social media contents that the following factors; supporting the military, ultranationalism, extreme religion, political parties backed by the military and militia-Pyithusits, are correlated.

Alternatively, since the coup, the military has been devoted itself to holding the new election that is illegitimate, in the near future. The new Union Election Commission – UEC, with new members appointed by the Junta, has undertaken several meetings and negotiations with political parties regarding the newly proposed electoral system: Proportional Representation-PR. In fact, the new UEC’s attempt to change the electoral system to PR system is illegitimate. Yet, practising the PR system will allow the pro-military political parties to grant more seats for their representatives in the parliament. Consequently, the increase in the number of pro-military party representatives in the parliament will add up to the original 25 percent of representatives from the Military, bestowed by the 2008 constitution; which, in turn, will sustain the power of the Military for the long run. As the military focuses on the illegitimate election, it is observed that the pro-military and nationalist political parties are registering back under the new election commission. However, the Junta cannot completely control most of the regions in the country yet and thus, it is assumed that they are not working on holding the election abruptly in the current times.

The military also has been stirring up the conflict and chaos between different ethnic groups and religious groups during the spring revolution. It is seen that the military has been undertaking serious religious and ethnic incitement between Kachin and Shanni, and between Karenni and Pa-O as Sagaing, Kachin, Karenni, and Shan are good strongholds of local revolutionary forces. The military has also been negotiating with each ERO through interests and benefits by either single-handedly or with the help of international organizations as the medium bait. Religious organizations were also utilized for the meeting and negotiation process. Information from social media pages reveal that the Junta’s counter-revolutionary “Pyithusit” militias, political parties backed by the military and ultranationalists co-related, and they are behind the scheme. In addition, among the registered political parties under the Junta’s election commission, it is found that there are at least 27 pro-military and ultranationalist political parties.






2

The attempt to divide Kachin and Shanni based on ethnic and religious identity

Since ancient times and history, tension has occurred between Kachin people and Shanni people that reside in Kachin and upper Sagaing regions. Yet, after the coup, the joint revolutionary operation between Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and local PDFs against the Junta has severely damaged the Junta troops. Later, in those areas, the Myanmar military armed their own militia groups with weapons to fight back the revolutionary forces. The military was aware of the pre-existing tension between two ethnic groups and their different religious iden-

ties, and approached the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) to support them and later turned against and broke down KIA and PDFs.

Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) was formed in 1989. After 2018, SNA established 3 battalions based in Hkamti, Homalin and Banmauk. In 2020, SNA formed another battalion under their chain of command. The Myanmar military strived to convince SNA to become a militia group under their command; however, SNA wanted the Myanmar military to officially legitimize them as an

တပ်မတော်တို့ထံမှ ချီတင်းတံဆိပ်
Shanni Nationalities Army ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများတပ်မတော်

ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများတပ်မတော်
Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA)
(သဘောထားထုတ်ပြန်ချက်)

စာအမှတ်- ၇/ ၂၀၂၂/ အမသ/ တသ/ HR
ရက်စွဲ- ၂၀၂၂ ခုနှစ် ဇန်နဝါရီလ ၆ ရက်

ပြည်ထောင်စုအတွင်း တိုင်းရင်းသားလူမျိုးစုပေါင်းစုံနေထိုင်လျက်ရှိကြပြီး မိမိတို့နှစ်သက်ရာ ဘာသာရေးကို ဂုဏ်ပြုကြိုဆိုစွာ ရိုသေလေးစားစွာ အလေးအမြတ်ထား ကိုက်ညီကြသည်။ လူမျိုးတိုင်း မိမိတို့ ဘာသာ သာသနာ တို့တော်စဉ်ပင်ရေးကို လိုလားကြသည်။ ကျွန်ုပ်တို့ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများသည် ရှေးယခင်ပုဂံခေတ် ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာကို အလေးအမြတ်ထားကိုးကွယ်လာကြသည်။ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ၏အနိစ္စအမှတ် လောကပါလတရားများ၊ ရဟန်းသံဃာ တို့၏ ကြီးစားအာဏာထုတ်ဖန်မှုမှာ သာသနာပြုခြင်းများကို အသိအမှတ်ပြု တန်ဖိုးထားလေးစားကြသည်။ ထိုအထဲမှ အများအပြား မိမိအမျိုးသားအကျိုးကို ပိုမို ရှမ်းအောင်ကြသော ရဟန်းသံဃာတော်အစွမ်းပြုကြောင်းများအား ပိုမို အားထား လေးစား အသိအမှတ်ပြု ကြသည်။

ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာစဉ်ပင်တို့တော်ရေးနှင့် ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများအဖွဲ့ကြီးတို့တော်ရေး ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားတို့ကား ပြန်ပြောင်း ရေတိုအား ရှမ်းစွမ်းတမ်း အားထုတ်ကြိုပမ်းလျက်ရှိသော ပြန်မာနိုင်ငံလုံးဆိုင်ရာရှမ်းသံဃာတော်များ သမဂ္ဂ (ဇမ္ဗူ) အလုပ်အမှုဆောင် (ဘဏ္ဍတော်ထိန်း) နောင်ပတ် ဆရာတော် ဦးဂန္ဓာ (ရှမ်းဦးစွန်း)အား ဇန်နဝါရီလ ၆ ရက်၊ ဇန်နဝါရီလ ၆ ရက်၊ နောင်ပတ်ရွာ (၄၉၂၀၂၂) ရက်နေ့တွင် (KIA) လက်နက်ကိုင်နှင့် (PDF) တို့က လက်နက်ဖြင့် ဖြိုခွဲတိုက်ခတ်ခံခဲ့ရပြီး ထိုနေ့တွင်ပင် ရက်စက်စွာသတ်ဖြတ်လိုက်ပါသည်။ အဆိုပါ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ ရဟန်းတော်အား ရက်စက်စွာသတ်ဖြတ်သော လုပ်ရပ်သည် လူ့ဆန်သော လုံးဝအကြမ်းဖက်လုပ်ရပ် ဖြစ်သည်။ အပြင် ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားလုံးနှင့် ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာကြီးတစ်ခုလုံးအား ဖြိုခွဲခြောက် ရန်ပြုသည့် အန္တရာယ်ဆိုးကြီး တစ်ရပ် ဖြစ်သည်။ ထိုအတူ ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားအတွင်း ဖယ်ဒရယ်စီမံကိန်းနှင့် တော်လှန်ရေးအား ဟန့်ဆောင်အကြောင်းပြောကာ လူ့အခွင့်အရေးများအား ပြောင်းပြောင်းတင်တင် ကျူးလွန် ဖြိုးဖောက်နေကြသော အဖွဲ့အစည်းများဖြစ်သည်။

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နိုင်ငံတော်အတွင်း မငြိမ်မသက်ဖြစ်နေသော အခြေအနေများကို (KIA)လက်နက်ကိုင်နှင့် (PDF)တို့သည် အခွင့်ကောင်းယူကာ ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားရေး တက်ကြွစွာဆောင်ရွက်ကြသူများအား အကြောက်တရားဖြင့် လက်နက်ပြ ဦးစွန်းနှိမ်နင်းဖမ်းဆီးနှိပ်စက်ခြင်း မတရားရက်စက်စွာသတ်ဖြတ်ခြင်း၊ ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားအဖွဲ့အစည်းများအပေါ် လူ့အခွင့်အရေးများ ဖြိုးဖောက်ခြင်း၊ ပြည်သူလူထုကြားတွင် ထင်ယောင်ထင်ဟားဖြစ်စေရန် မီဒီယာအားဖြင့် မသမာသောအကြံအစည်များ လုပ်ကြံအုပ်စိုး သတင်းလွှင့်ခြင်းအား တစ်နေ့ထက်တစ်နေ့ ပိုမို လုပ်ကိုင်လာကြသည်။

(KIA)လက်နက်ကိုင်အဖွဲ့သည် ယခင် နှစ်ပေါင်းများစွာနှင့် ခေတ်အဆက်ဆက်တွင် လည်းကောင်း၊ ယခုနှစ်များတွင် (PDF)များနှင့်ပူး ပေါင်း၍လည်းကောင်း ၊ ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားနှင့် အမျိုးသားရေးတက်ကြွစွာ ကြိုးစားကြသူများအား မတရားဖမ်းဆီးခြင်း၊ လူ့ဆန်ရွာနှိပ်စက်သတ်ဖြတ်ခဲ့ခြင်းများကို ကျူးလွန်ခဲ့ကြသည်။ ယခင်လပိုင်းအတွင်း ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားနှင့် ယဉ်ကျေးမှု နှစ်ယက်ဦးစိုင်းသန့်စေ၊ ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားအဖွဲ့ နိုင်ငံရေးတော်တို့အား မတရားဖမ်းဆီး သတ်ဖြတ်မှုတို့အပြင် ယခု ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားရေးကို တက်ကြွစွာ ဦးဆောင်သူ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ ရဟန်းတော် ဦးဂန္ဓာအား အဓမ္မဖမ်းဆီး၍ ရက်စက်စွာသတ်ဖြတ်မှုတို့အား လုံးဝ(လုံးဝ)ပြင်းထန်စွာ ပြစ်တင်နှိချုသည်။

ရင်းအကျိုးဆက်များအား ပြုလုပ်စနစ်တီကြေသူ (KIA)အဖွဲ့နှင့် (PDF)တို့တွင် လုံးဝတာဝန်ရှိပြီး ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများ၏ နှလုံးသည်မှတ်သမိုင်းတွင် ဖြေဖျက်မရသော သခိုင်းကြွေးများအဖြစ် မှတ်ယူသည်။ မည်သည့် နည်းဖြင့် မဆို ပြန်လည်လက်တက်ပြန်သွားမည်ဖြစ်ကြောင်း သိစေအပ်သည်။

(ဇမ္ဗူတော်မတီ)
ရှမ်းအမျိုးသားများတပ်မတော်
Shanni Nationalities Army(SNA)

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"A Shanni monk is killed by the KIA and PDF and it is a threat to the entire Shanni nationality and Buddhism," released by SNA on September 6 2022.

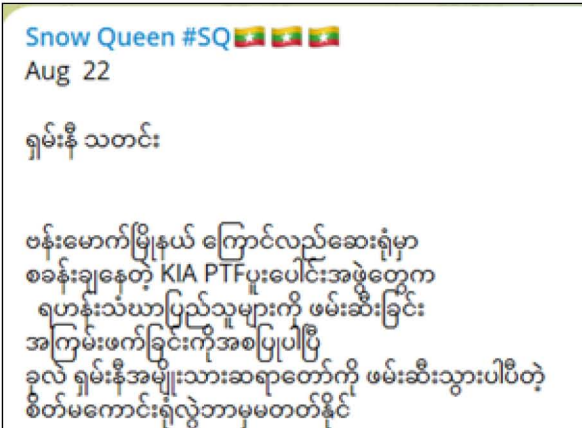
ethnic organization. In September 2021, the spokesperson from SNA denied that they are not a militia group of the Junta, but since the coup, the Junta did not invite SNA to their peace conferences. (BNI, 2021)

The Junta forces and SNA fought on the frontline a few times in the early stages of the coup in 2021 but it was not intense and there was no fatality. (DVB, 2021) However, it is observed that in January 2022, Sai Aung Min, the spokesperson from SNA, firmly stated that SNA would not accept any territorial invasion of an ERO that used PDFs to disguise as a fight with the military; indirectly referring to KIA. (CNI, 2022) In addition,

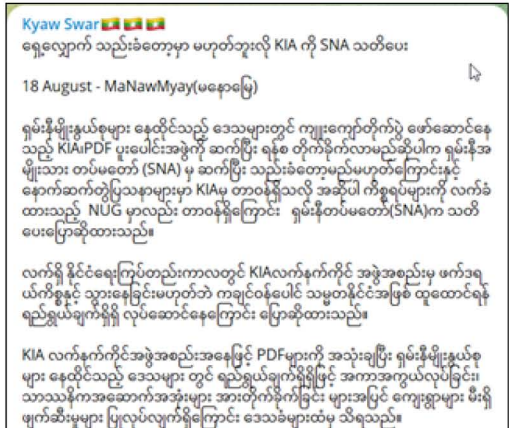
from June 2022 onwards, SNA collaborated with the Junta and started attacking the KIA and PDF joint forces. Even until May 2023, intense battles continue to break out in those areas.

Area where battles frequently occur between Junta-SNA joint forces and KIA-PDF joint forces

Kachin	Kamaing
Kachin	Hpakant
Kachin	Mogaung
Sagaing	Hkamti
Sagaing	Tamu
Sagaing	Pinlebu
Sagaing	Banmauk
Sagaing	Homalin



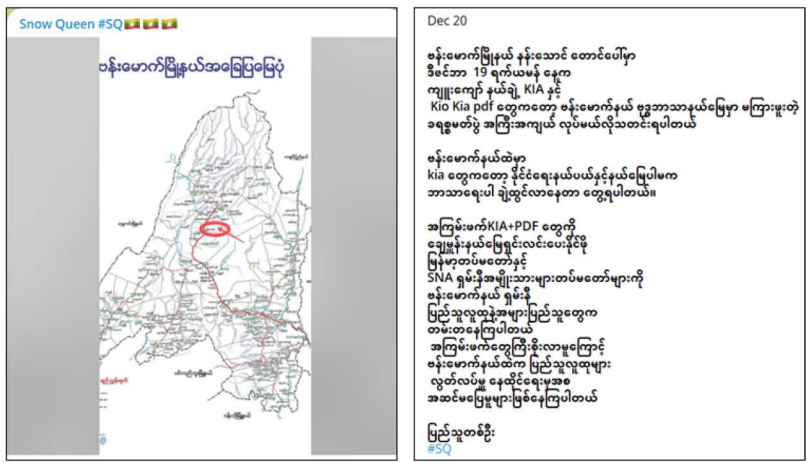
A pro-military Telegram channel is spreading the news that KIA and PDF are targeting the Shanni people and Buddhist buildings. They also spread misinformation that KIA is aiming to build their own nation.



It was circulated in pro-military Telegram channels that the KIA and PDF arrested monks and civilians. That is portraying and propagating that the KIA and PDF are attackers targeting Buddhism.



There also propagandas on those telegram channels that say Kachin people are the oppressors of Shanni people, and that the KIO, PDF and NUG are committing genocide against the Shanni.

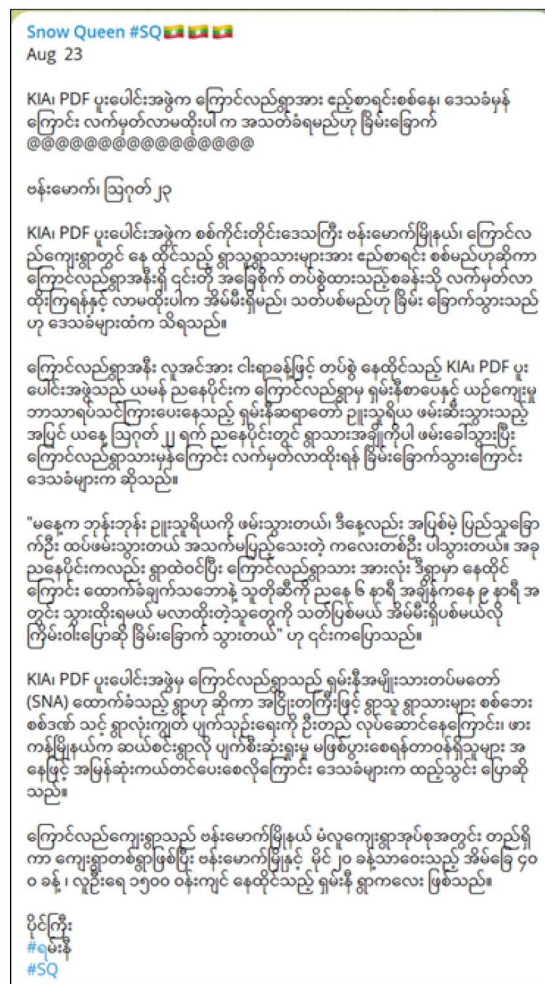


Spreading the fake news that the Christian KIA are expanding their religion in the Buddhist territory of the Shanni people, the pro-military Telegram channels attempt to divide the Kachin and Shanni people based on their religious difference.



Spreading the fake news that the Christian KIA are expanding their religion in the Buddhist territory of the Shanni people, the pro-military Telegram channels attempt to divide the Kachin and Shanni people based on their religious difference.

In September 2022, SNA issued the statement that implies KIA and PDF arrested and slaughtered the monks and those who do advocacy for Shanni culture and literature. Besides, at the same time, pro-military media and military supporters spread propaganda and statements that highlight the ethnic conflicts and diverse religious values between Kachin and Shanni, on Facebook and Telegram.



A pro-military Telegram channel created an image that the KIA and PDF threatened Shanni villages for grudges towards ethnic differences.

Propaganda and fake news say that KIA and PDF joined together to crush the Shanni just for ethnic hatred, and they have slaughtered the monks and attacked the religious buildings. The news also says KIA robbed taxes from Shanni people, abducted them just to blackmail for money, and committed rapes. In addition, the fake news says KIA is attempting to colonize their religion of Christianity in the Shanni area where Buddhism is the main religion.

Ultranationalism: Military's attempts to the State Control



The pro-military Telegram channel spread that the KIA has kidnapped Shanni people and forced them to ransom them with money. It is an attempt to portray the KIA as an organization that attacks literature, culture and ethnic identity of Shanni people, and to mislead the information as an ethnic conflict between the Shanni ethnic group and the KIA.

Aug 18
KIA သုံးစွဲ နှစ်လျှိုထွက် ဖမ်းပြီး တစ်ရက်လျှင် သေ သိမ်းနှုန်းဖြင့် ပြန်ရွှေ့ခြင်း

18 August - MaNawMyay(မနေမပြ)

ဩဂုတ်လ ၁၈ ရက်နေ့က ကချင်ပြည်နယ်၊ ဆင်တိုမြို့၊ ဆွန်ခဲကျေးရွာရှိ သေသစ်ခွမ်း လှူပွဲ၌ ၄ ဦးကို KIA နှင့် PDF ဖမ်းဆီးသုံးစွဲမှု မဟုတ်ဘဲ အခြားအခြေအနေအထားတွင် ဖမ်းဆီးစွဲခဲ့ခြင်း ဖြစ်ကြောင်း တစ်ရက်လျှင် သေ သိမ်းနှုန်းဖြင့် ပြန်ရွှေ့ခြင်းနှင့် ပြစ်မှုများ အပေးသည်။

အဆိုပါ ဖမ်းဆီးခံရသူ ၄ ဦးအနက် ၃ ဦးမှာ ငွေကြေးဖြင့် ပြန်ရွှေ့ခံနိုင်သော်လည်း တစ်ဦးမှာ မိသားစုနှင့် ငွေကြေးအခင်းမပြည့်ကြောင့် ပြန်ရွှေ့ခံခြင်း မရှိဘဲ ဘေးထွက် သေဆုံးသွားကြောင်း ပြောဆိုထား။

ဆိုချိန်တွင် KIA သည် ဖမ်းဆီး စားပေးရန် ကျေးဇူးအတွင်း လွှတ်ပေးရန် စီစဉ်နေပြီး ဖမ်းဆီးသတ်ဖြတ်သောအခါ ပြောဆိုကြားရသည်ကို ကျွန်ုပ်တို့ နှစ်လျှင် ၃၀၀ ရာခိုင်နှုန်း ကျသည့် နှစ်လျှင်စာပေနှင့် ယဉ်ကျေးမှုအလုံးတော်တော် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့က ဝန်ခံနိုင်ရန်အတွက် ကျုပ်တို့က အခြေအနေအထားအတိုင်း ဆက်လက်လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်စေရန် ဆန္ဒရှိကြောင်း ထုတ်ဖော်ထား။

ဆင်တို - KIA တပ်ဖွဲ့တပ်မှူး

Aug 19
စားကန့်တွင် ကေအိုင်ကေအဖွဲ့၏ ဖမ်းဆီးခြင်းခံခဲ့ရသည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

မြစ်ကြီးနား၊ ဩဂုတ် ၁၉

ကချင်ပြည်နယ်၊ မားကန့်မြို့နယ်၊ ဟောင်းပါးကျေးရွာတွင် ကေအိုင်ကေအဖွဲ့၏ ဖမ်းဆီးခြင်းခံခဲ့ရသည့် ရှမ်းစီး စာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော်သည် အသတ်ခံလိုက်ရပြီဟု သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်နေကြောင်း ဆရာ စိုင်းရေကျော်နှင့် ဆက်စပ်သူများထံမှ သိရသည်။

#SQ

Aug 20
အာဖဂန် ဝိုက်က ဂျာနယ်နှင့် နယ်စပ် မဟာမိတ်များ ဝိုင်းရံသဖြင့် လိုအပ်သည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

အာဖဂန် ဝိုက်က ဂျာနယ်နှင့် နယ်စပ် မဟာမိတ်များ ဝိုင်းရံသဖြင့် လိုအပ်သည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

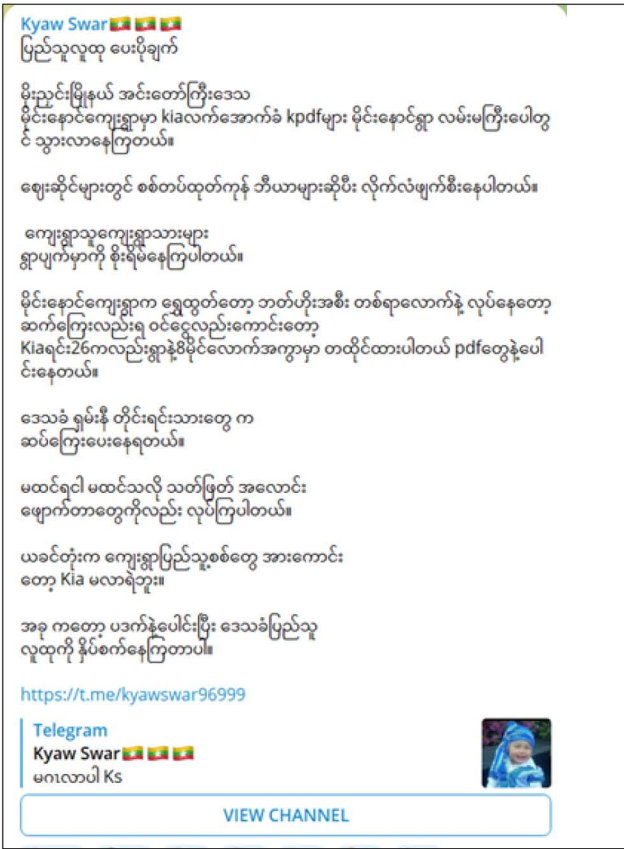
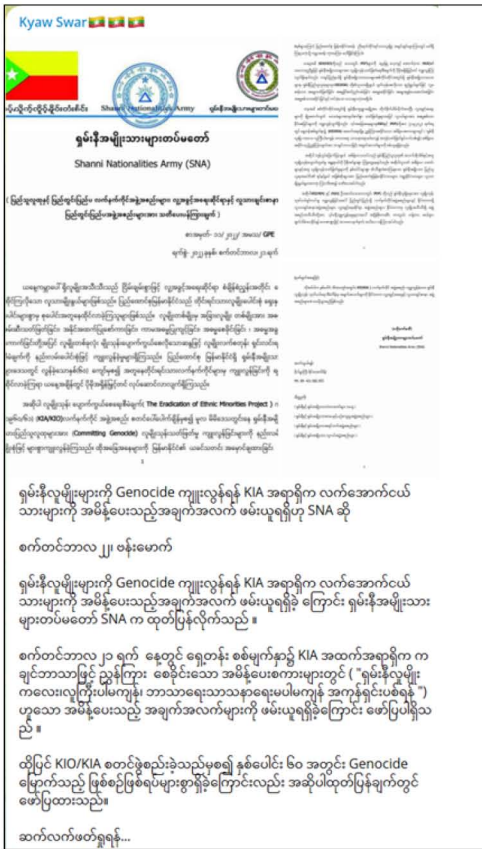
အာဖဂန် ဝိုက်က ဂျာနယ်နှင့် နယ်စပ် မဟာမိတ်များ ဝိုင်းရံသဖြင့် လိုအပ်သည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

Aug 21
အာဖဂန် ဝိုက်က ဂျာနယ်နှင့် နယ်စပ် မဟာမိတ်များ ဝိုင်းရံသဖြင့် လိုအပ်သည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

အာဖဂန် ဝိုက်က ဂျာနယ်နှင့် နယ်စပ် မဟာမိတ်များ ဝိုင်းရံသဖြင့် လိုအပ်သည့် ရှမ်းစီးစာပေနှင့် ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှုကော်မတီမှ အတိုး၊ အကစော ကိုစိုင်းရေကျော် အသတ်ခံရကြောင်း သတင်းထွက်ပေါ်ပေမူ

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A pro-military Telegram channel created a propaganda image saying that KIA has been committing killing, destroying dead bodies and demanding taxes from Shanni people.



A pro-military Telegram channel created an image that the KIA and PDF threatened Shanni villages for grudges towards ethnic differences.



Pro-military Telegram propagated for the purpose of dividing the revolutionary groups and Shanni people that KIA and PDF killed a member of the Shanni Solidarity Party.



3

The attempt to divide Karenni and Pa-Ō based on ethnic and religious identity

Numerous intense battles broke out between Myanmar military and Karenni revolutionary forces on the battlefields of Karenni after the coup in 2021, which resulted in the severe defeat by the military that they had to struggle for defense. On 10 June, 2021, representatives from 3 Karenni revolutionary forces, Christian religious leaders and commander of the Eastern Military Command met in Taunggyi, Shan. On 15 June, Karenni Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) issued a statement that announced the temporary cease of attack, following the

arrangement of peace organizations and religious leaders. (KNDF, 2021) However, the battles resumed in early July. (Myanmar Now, 2021c) (Myanmar Now, 2021d)

Despite Min Aung Hlaing's invitation to EROs for one-on-one negotiation meeting within 2 years after the coup, KNDF refused to meet the Junta. There are no Karenni political parties registered under the Junta's election commission. Current circumstances reveal that the Junta cannot hold elections in Karenni, causing them to militarize



Right after the massacre happened in Nan Naint Village, the military's propaganda telegram channels distributed the fake images photoshopped with guns besides dead bodies and mentioned that the Karenni Defense Forces had been killed by the military

the region with much pressure and crush the Karenni revolutionary forces. In addition, the Junta attempts to impose the ethnic and religious incitement between Karenni and Pa-O people.



After Pa-O National Organization (PNO) made a ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar military in 1991, they were given some territory in the southern-west region of Shan to rule as No 6 Shan special autonomous zones, and the rights to organize business. From that time onwards, PNO has been affiliated to the Myanmar military as their pro-military militia group. In 2023, PNO registered as a political party again under the Junta's election commission.

On March 7, 2023, Min Aung Hlaing flew to Pa-O National Organization and met their leader, Aung Khan Hti. Then, on the evening of March 7, PNO/PNA issued an announcement in Pa-O language, which commanded the Pa-O youths to volunteer in security forces on the Shan-Karenni border, and declared that those who did not sign up for the military service will be deemed as unpatri-



ကရင်နီKNDF/PDF က နမ်းနိန်းရွာဘုန်းကြီး(၃)ပါးနှင့်ပြည်သူ ကိုသတ်ဖြတ်ခဲ့တယ် ခင်ဗျားတို့လုပ်ရက်တယ်🙄

ပင်လောင်းမြို့နယ် နမ်းနိန်းရွာကနေ ပြေးလွတ်တဲ့ပအိုဝ်းပြည်သူစစ်ရှောင်တစ်ဦးစကားအရ "ကျွန်တော်တို့ နမ်းနိန်းရွာ စစ်ဖြစ်တော့ ရွာသားအကုန်နီးပါးပြေးကြတယ်။ ဒါပေမယ့် ရွာကိုစောင့်ရှောက်ဖို့ ရွာသားအချို့ကျန်တယ်။ PDFတွေက ရွာကို ဝင်လာပြီး ဆိုင်ကယ် ဖုန်း ရွှေ ငွေစတဲ့ အခြားတန်ဖိုးရှိတာခိုးယူတယ်။ ရွာကပအိုဝ်းရွာပအိုဝ်းလူမျိုးဆိုတော့ အပြင်ဖက်ပအိုဝ်းစစ်တပ်PNA ကိုသတင်းပေးမှာစိုးလို့ ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်းမှာ အကုန်လုံးအစုလိုက်အပြုံ လိုက် သတ်ဖြတ်ခဲ့တယ်။ ရွာကကျန်တဲ့လူနဲ့စစ်ဘေးရှောင်တဲ့လူအဆက်အသွယ်ပြု တ်အောင် ရည်ရွယ်ပြီးသတ်ခဲ့တယ်။ ရွာနဲ့ဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်းကိုလည်းမီးရှို့ခဲ့တယ်" လို့ ပြေးလွတ်လာတဲ့ စစ်ဘေးရှောင်ရဲစကားပါ။

ခင်ဗျားတို့မိဒီယာဘယ်လောက်ပဲလိမ်လိမ် ကျွန်ုပ်တို့ပအိုဝ်းတွေမှာ အမှန်တရားသက်သေရှိတယ်။ ပအိုဝ်းရွာတွေကိုကျူးကျော်တာ ပြန်ဆုတ်ခွာပေးပါ။

ပု-KNDF/PDFက သတ်ဖြတ်ပြီး ပုံတွေရှိထား

<https://t.me/kyawswar96999>

👍 276 🗣️ 84 😬 28 😄 12 🙏 4 🙄 3 🤔 2 🤢 2 😞 1

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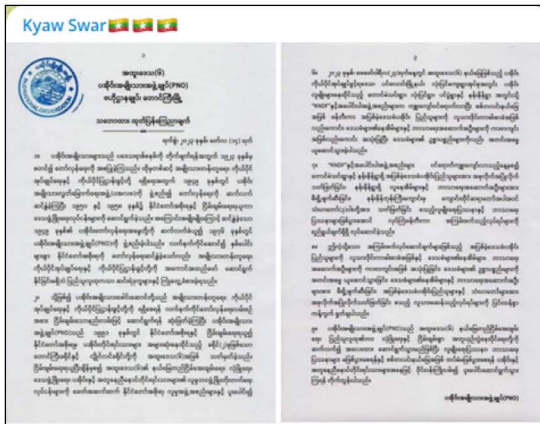
Later, the pro-military telegram channels shifted the propaganda that the Nan Naint Massacre was the killing of Pa-O people by the Karenni Defense Forces

otic people. (Mekong News, 2023) (Sai Harn Lin, 2023) In addition, PNO/PNA took the census of the population in the region for military training, military service and the upcoming election. (နိုင်မင်းလွင်, 2023) Starting from March 7, they also collected 75,000 to 100,000 Kyat as regional security fee from each family in northern and southern Pin Laung villages. (AyeayawaddyTimes, 2023)

On March 11 2023, 3 monks and 21 civilians were massacred by Myanmar military in Nan Naint village, PinLaung township, Shan. In the early days after the incident, pro-military Telegram channels posted the images of dead bodies photoshopped with guns, and wrote that the military had slaughtered the Karenni PDFs. (RFA, 2023) However, pro-military lobbyists and military supporters later changed the story that Karenni PDF and KNDF massacred the Buddhist monks and Pa-O people, and continuously spread

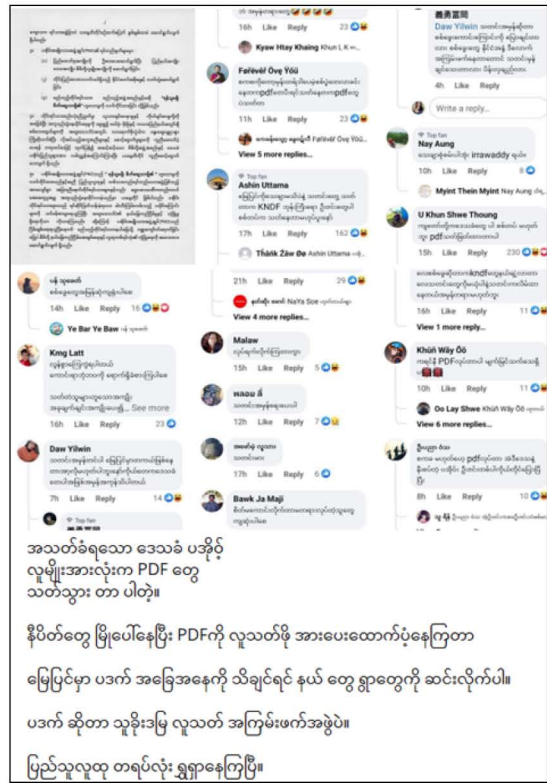


In order to separate two ethnic groups religiously, those Telegram channels also claimed that the massacre was caused by the motive of Christian revolutionary forces to kill the Buddhist monks.



the fake story on social media pages and their individual blogs. Reviewing the military propaganda talk shows and round table discussions such as “The Youth Talk”, “People’s Voice, from People’s Hearts”, “News by the Newsmen”, posted on social media pages, it is observed that those pro-military groups are trying to conceal the war crime committed by the Junta soldiers, and ignite the conflict between Pa-O and Karenni people. On March 15, PNO/PNA led the anti-PDF and anti-KNDF demonstration in Taunggyi and every Pa-O household was pressured to send one family member to attend the demonstration event. (Kantarawaddy Times, 2023) (Shan News, 2023)

Propaganda from pro-military lobbyists and military supporters on Facebook and Telegram portray National Unity Government (NUG) and Karenni revolutionary forces as the culprits behind the attempt to entice internal split between Pa-O and Karenni people, and between PNO and the Junta. In addition, the lobbyists are propagating that revolutionary forces intentionally committed



The Junta's partner, the PNO militia, announced and accused the perpetrators of the massacre as PDF members, and the announcement was re-circulated by pro-military Telegram channels.

the massacre just to accuse the military as the culprit so that they can get the upper hand in UN and ASEAN meetings. Pro-military supporters accused the media that mentioned the Junta’s massacre in Nan Naint village as media sponsored by the West. They also implicitly badmouthed that Pa-O people are Buddhists and polite while Karenni people are savages, to create the tension between two ethnic groups. Pro-military media also spread fake news that revolutionary forces killed monks and teachers in Chin, Magway and Sagaing, and they also killed the monks in the Nan Naint village incident.

The divide-and-rule tactic

Throughout history, the Myanmar military has been using peace talks as a tool to play the power politics. There is tons of evidence, which shows the military's endeavor to split the revolutionary forces by offering one-on-one negotiation meetings to EROs to appeal to them with interest-related deals. On the other hand, there are also records that show that the military did not invite and appeal to certain organizations, which they wanted to annihilate and which seem conquerable to them. On March 23, 2020, Anti-terrorism Central Committee denounced Arakan Army (AA) to be a terrorist group and unlawful association, and AA was not invited to the peace talks. (*MLIS, 2020*) However, on March 11 2021, the Junta removed AA from the terrorist list and later, offered the invitation to make peace negotiations. (*Myanmar Now, 2021*)

After the coup in 2021, the Junta declared the National Unity Government (NUG) and People's Defense Forces (PDFs) to be the terrorist groups and did not invite them to negotiation meetings.

It is observed that the Junta had made offers and negotiations to ethnic revolutionary organizations (EROs) to convince them not to join the spring revolution. The core reason behind the military's endeavor to strike the peace deal with those EROs is to balance and maintain their power; to curtail the war between the military and EROs, and to prevent EROs from supporting PDFs, and prevent the incidents that the joint forces attack the military from all sides throughout the country. On the other hand, the Junta has been employing the brutal crackdown on local defense forces, using air strikes and imposing the scorched earth policy aggressively on the regions where revolutionary forces take the stronghold. There are records of incidents that when EROs engage in skirmishes, the military backs up the organization that is close to them in cracking down their enemy by using air forces. During 2022, battles broke out between Shan State Progress Party/ Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) and Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), and the military reinforced

RCSS by launching an air strike. (Shwe Phee Myay, 2022) (People's Spring, 2022) Another notable incident happened on January 24 2023, while the military's National Solidarity and Peace Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) and RCSS leaders convened in a discussion in Nay Pyi Taw, the military air force flew their YAK-130 jets closely above the SSPP headquarters. (*Delta News, 2023*)

In addition, the military uses the local religious organizations as mediators in striking the ceasefire accord and peace negotiations with EROs. On June 10 2021, representatives from 3 Karen revolutionary forces, Christian religious leaders and commander of the Eastern Military Command convened in a discussion in Taunggyi, Shan. After that convergence, on June 15 2021, Karen Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF) issued a statement that announced that they would follow the arrangement of peace organizations and religious leaders and cease the attack temporarily. (*KNDF, 2021*) However, the battles resumed in early July. (*Myanmar Now, 2021c*) (*Myanmar Now, 2021d*) On November 1 2021, the Junta's National Solidarity Peacemaking Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) convened in a meeting with representatives from 5 Christian communities; including Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Peace-talk Creation Group (PCG), etc and urged them to convince the KIA to agree the ceasefire and peace negotiation with the military. (*RFA, 2021b*)

The Junta also released the members of EROs who are detained as prisoners and awarded the honors to EROs leaders in the attempt to bid for peace talks. Leaders of EROs that signed NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) were awarded the "Wunna Kyaw Htin" degree (awarded for outstanding performance in promoting the good of the public). The awarded leaders include the KNU president, general Saw Mutu Sae Poe, general Yawd Serk, chairman of RCSS, Khun Okkar from PNLO (Pa-O National Liberation Organization), Naing Shwe Kyin and Naing Htaw Mon from New Mon State Party (NMSP), and Khine Soe Naing Aung from ALP (Arakan Liberation Army). (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2022*)

The Myanmar army did not only convene in-group discussions with EROs but also engage in meetings with NCA signatories, EROs that did not sign NCA, and private meetings with individual organization. Besides, the military tried to negotiate with EROs through international mediation. On June 1st and 2nd of 2023, Mr. Guo Bao, the foreign affairs special envoy for Yunnan Province, attended the meeting of the Myanmar military and 3 Brotherhood Northern Alliance: MNDA (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army), TNLA (Ta'ang National Liberation Army) and AA (Arakan Army). (*အောင်သိင်္ခ, 2023*) The Junta's endeavor for successful negotiations does not come from the good will for perpetual peace rather; it is just a quick act to prevent, to a certain extent, the joining of revolutionary forces.



5

What is really behind the pro-military militia movement?

Many pro-military ultranationalist groups such as “Pyu Saw Htee” (semi-mythical warrior-king from the Burmese chronicles) and “Thway Thout” (blood-sworn) have emerged after the military staged the coup. Pyu Saw Htee group was formed in March, 2021 and Thway Thout in April, 2022. Other groups such as YCS (Yangon Castigate Group), Sun Ye (kite force), Thway Thitsar (loyal by blood) and Myochit Nyunt Paung (patriotic alliance) were formed in parallel. The Junta denied that they did not raise those groups and that they had only established “Pyithusit” (militias). The military also holds commemorative ceremonies where

they provide the militias with weapons. Either they are Pyithusit, Pyu Saw Htee or Thway Thout, the military has been training all of them with arms to take part in operations and missions.

Generally, Pyithusits and Pyu Saw Htee are formed to fill up the military’s new recruits. Pyu Saw Htee are responsible for reinforcing the Junta’s soldiers in raiding the villages, patrolling in the cities, guarding and security at the checkpoints. On the other hand, Thway Thout group is to target not only NLD party members, NLD supporters, revolutionary forces and their supporters, media that report the atrocities of the

Junta, but also respective family members, and send them threat messages and slaughter them. The name tags with the logo of Thway Thout group were hung on the dead bodies of the people slaughtered by the group. It is seen that Pyu Saw Htee, Pyithusit and Thway Thout groups comprise of pro-military supporters, ultranationalists and members of military-backed political party members.

5.1 State religion and pro-military militia

Ultrationalists local monks who had influence over people were asked to lead the people and coax them to join Pyithusits (pro-military militias). It is found that Pyithusit led by those extremist monks are stronger.

Images and videos of the villagers welcoming the monks loaded with guns, can be seen on

social media. Local extremist monks use the tactic of threatening and propagating hate speech to coerce the village people to enlist in Pyithusit. They also portray the revolutionary forces as the terrorists who will abolish Buddhism.

U Wathawa, the extremist monk who led the Pyithusit in Kant Balu township, Sagaing sporadically encourages to wipe out the villages that support PDFs, and to burn the KIA camps and their military outposts. He also framed the media that condemned the atrocity of the military to be the propaganda media of the West. U Ariya Wuntha (addressed as the “Pauk monk”) from Pauk township, Magyway portrays the Chin revolutionary forces and PDFs as terrorist groups imposing hostile attacks on the monks and Buddhism.



Armed militias are seen to be stationed inside the monastery compound where the “Pauk” monk resides. The Pauk monk has claimed that many Pyithusits are eager to serve under his leadership and that he will voluntarily command and lead those militias if the Junta can fulfill the military requirements.

5.2 Political parties, nationalism and militia

The link between pro-military supporters, organizers of pro-military rallies and campaigns, political party members backed by the military, religious extremists, ultranationalists and armed groups formed and supported by the military can be seen through social media posts of a township USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) member.

A township secretary of USDP party is found to be actively involved in organizing the party-related activities. Not only did she take charge of organizing the USDP election campaigns in the 2020 general elections but also she participated in the USDP events, youth talks and pro-military rallies. Right before the coup, in January 2021, she was arrested for organizing the pro-military campaigns in a township. On January 31 2023, she participated in a protest against the UN statement on Myanmar.



In January 2021, a female USDP member participated in a pro-military rally.



In January 2023, she participated again in a protest against the UN resolution.

The said woman is a staunch nationalist, an activist, and a racist: her attributes are confirmed by her postings about religious and racial extremism on her social media.

Besides, she also supports “Mahaw Thadar” private high schools that are founded by ultra-nationalists and nationalist monks. U Saykainna who became the Rector of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University under the Junta usually visits those “Mahaw Thadar” private high schools. She strongly believes these schools are important for Buddhism and the country.

She also supports Myanmar military’s genocide crime on Rohingya people and stands for Myanmar military when it faces the trial at the Inter-

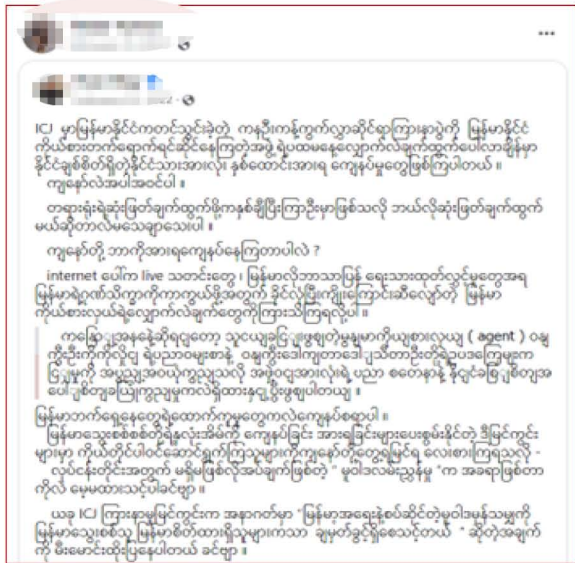
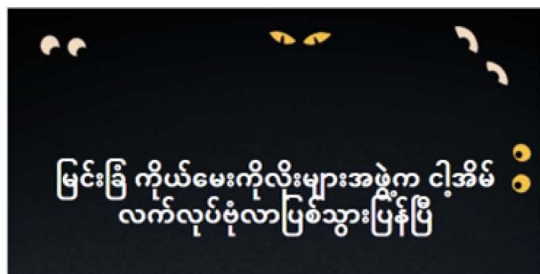
national Court of Justice. Racist expressions can be seen on her posts on social media.



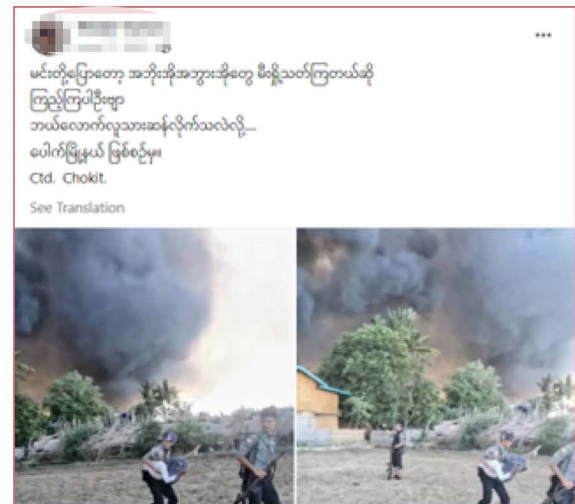
She actively involves in military-backed political party, USDP, activities



She intentionally used the racist words and expressions on her social media posts.



She stood for the military that committed the genocide.



The Junta soldiers were portrayed as the saviors of civilians and PDFs as the terrorists in her reverse narratives.



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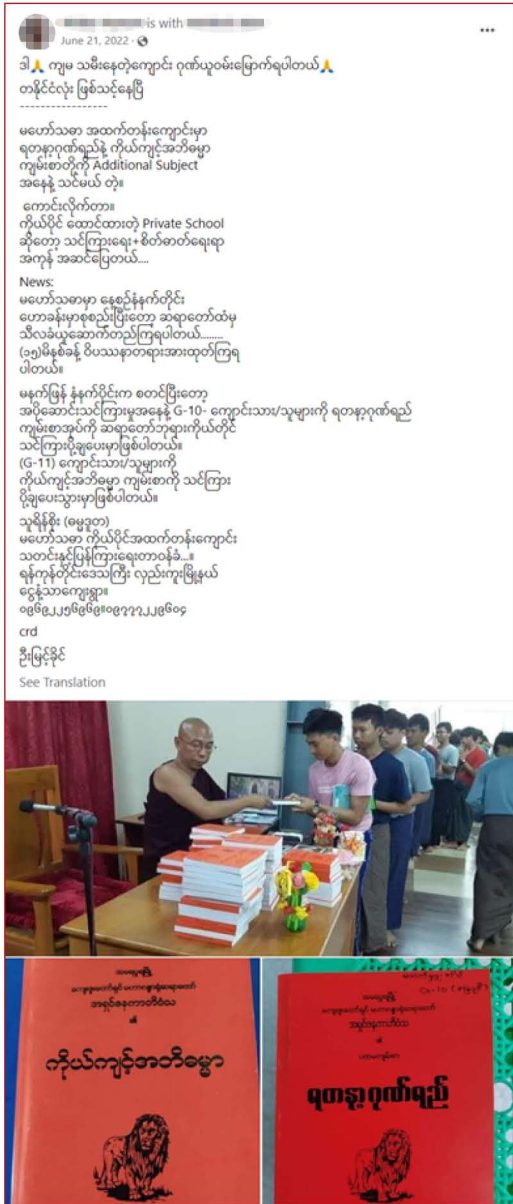
Ultranationalism: Military's attempts to the State Control

She is also a strong defender of the Myanmar military's atrocities against civilians and revolutionary forces in the spring revolution. Writing propaganda texts for the military, she insists on

taking action on anti-dictatorship protesters who are involved in the spring revolution and freezing their assets. She also alleges the independent media as pro-NLD and pro-West media.



Content about ultranationalism and extreme race and religion on her social media.



Support and praise for Mahawithar schools related to ultranationalist monks can be found on her social media.

It is observed that the said USDP member has connections with a local Pyithusit armed by the military. She visits to Pyithusit military training and frequently posts images of her wearing Pyithusit uniforms on social media. She portrays Pyithusit as philanthropic people, posting her

activities of volunteering in paving the road, cleaning the public hospitals, doing the religious deeds, together with Pyithusit militias, on social media. There was an attack on her house with handmade bombs by revolutionary forces, which she challenged on social media with an invitation

Ultrationalism: Military's attempts to the State Control



She held a religious donation event in cooperation with the Junta-backed militia group.



The female member of the USDP party was seen together with a local militia group armed by the Junta.



The female member of the USDP party was seen together with a local militia group armed by the Junta.



That USDP member wrote on her social media that she went to support the military demonstration training of Pyithusit militia.

to attack her. Besides, she describes the revolutionary forces as the destroyers of the race and religion, as the terrorists who attack the religious buildings of Buddhists, Buddhist monks and government teachers, and as the destroyers of the country.

The aforementioned factors are one of the pieces of evidence that prove the correlation between pro-military supporters, organizers of pro-military rallies and campaigns, members of political parties backed by the military, racists and religious



She posted pictures of herself in militia uniform on social media.

extremists, ultranationalists and armed groups formed and supported by the military. There are many other similar incidents happening all over the country.

The Junta's election and Political Parties

Myanmar military staged the coup and seized power on February 1 2021, alleging the results of the 2020 general elections invalid as the votes were fraudulent. On the same day, the Junta issued the announcement that the UEC (Union Election Commission) refused to provide evidence of irregularities in voter lists. On February 2, the military claimed to re-assess the irregularities of votes. The Junta arrested UEC members from all regional and township levels in February 2021. (*MyanmarNow, 2021a*)

Since the coup, the military has constructively prepared to seize power eternally and has dedicated themselves to form a new Union Election Commission of their own and hold the new election. Besides, the Junta tried to permanently dissolve the influential NLD (National League for Democracy) that has unconditional support from civilians, and change the electoral system to Proportional Representation (PR). On March 24 2022, Zaw Min Tun, the spokesperson of the Junta said in a press conference that the Military Council has been striving to hold the new general election successfully all over the country by

2023. (RFA, 2022) In the press conference held on April 27, 2022, the Junta's election commission announced it would hold the election with Closed List PR system. (DVB, 2022) In addition, the election commission stated in the press conference on September 20, 2022 that the process of holding new elections is ongoing and the new political party laws are being prepared; collecting the census for voting polls has already begun; and Myanmar territorial structure will be set with new divisions to exercise the new PR system. (ရဲမှန်, 2022)

It is found that the Junta is planning to use the advanced technology and electronic voting system for their new election. In February 2023, the Junta's election commission introduced Myanmar Electronic Voting Machine (MEVM) to Min Aung Hlaing. " We cannot guarantee for sure that a new electronic voting system will be applied to every constituency, however, we intend to use the new system in the upcoming election. Some constituencies might proceed with the old conventional system. Anyway, we are determined to work with the new voting machine," Zaw Min Htun has stated. (BBC News မြန်မာ, 2023) The Junta also announced that the prototype of a new electronic registration system that registers both biographic and biometric data of a person is implemented in Nay Pyi Taw. If successful, the new system will be applied in the whole country. (အောင်ဇေ, 2023) According to the Junta's announcement, they will conduct the new census from October 1 to 15 in 2024. (စုမြတ်မွန်, 2023) The Ministry of Immigration and Population under the Junta stated that preparation is on-

going to collect the census data by mobiles and tablets with the help from international consultants. (ငြိမ်းချမ်း, 2023)

The Junta also approached political parties and conducted many meetings to convince them to support their new election and PR system. On February 26 2021, 53 out of 91 political parties accepted the invitation and attended the meeting of the Junta's election commission, which announced the result of the 2020 elections was officially dissolved. (သက်နိုင်, 2021) On May 21 2021, the commission and 59 parties convened again in a meeting and the chair of the commission discussed the 2020 election fraud, implementation of a new PR system in the next election and the dissolution of the NLD party. (The Irrawaddy, 2021)

On August 24 2021, Min Aung Hlaing claimed that switching to the PR system would allow wider representation for parliament representatives and enable a more respectful and inclusive legislature. His announcement was later confirmed by the statement of the Junta's election commission at the September 30, 2021 press conference that the new PR system was approved by most of the political parties. However, the commission did not mention the exact number of the said political parties. (Myanmar Now, 2021e) On October 9 2021, the Junta's National Solidarity Peacemaking Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) met with 18 political parties and discussed practising the PR system. (RFA, 2021a)

On November 5 and 6 2021, the Junta's election commission and 51 political parties met in Yangon. The commission has proposed parties to implement both the PR system and first-past-the-post (FPTP) system in the upcoming elections. The Junta's election commission said that parties needed to decide which House (Hluttaw) among Pyiduangsue Hluttaw, State Hluttaw and Regional Hluttaw the new PR system would be practised. (*BBC News* [၆၆၆၆], 2021) 62 political parties suggested that a closed list proportional representation system (Closed List PR) should be implemented in all three Hluttaw in Myanmar, in the meeting with the Junta's election commission held from December 24 to 26, 2021. (*The Irrawaddy*, 2021b) (*The Irrawaddy*, 2022)

On January 26 2023, the Junta's Union Election Commission enacted a new law on registration of political parties. The new law states that members of outlawed organizations and political prisoners are banned from forming a political party. The new electoral law sets minimum funding for political parties to organize campaigns; 100 million Kyats for parties for nationwide campaigns and 10 million Kyat for regional campaigns, which have to be deposited at Myanmar Economic Bank (state-owned bank). The new law also sets membership levels for parties participating in the polls; to collect 100,000 party members for nationwide campaigns and 1000 party members for regional campaigns within 90 days.

Out of 92 pre-existing political parties, National Development and Peace Party was abolished in 2021 and Union Betterment Party in 2022, respectively. 50 parties out of the rest 90 re-registered under the new political party registration law acted by the Junta's election commission. On March 29 2023, the Junta's election commission abolished 40 political parties that did not re-register. There are 13 new political parties and thus, altogether 63 political parties registered to the Junta's election commission. 12 parties signed up for nationwide election campaigns and 51 parties for regional campaigns. It is observed that ultranationalist political parties that condemn the existence of Rohingya re-registered to the Junta's election commission. Out of 34 parties that met with Min Aung Hlaing on November 12, 2020, 23 parties re-registered. Among 32 parties that issued the joint-statements of condemnation against the election result of the NLD government, supporting the sovereignty propagandized by the military, discrimination on Rohingya, alongside the USDP party, 27 parties re-registered. To fulfill the designated party membership, ward and village administrators appointed by the Junta in Nyaung Done township, Ayeyarwaddy are forcing the local residents to sign up in military-sponsored political parties. (Khit Thit Media, 2023) USDP is the only party in Ayeyarwaddy that organized office-opening events and ceremonies of signboard hanging ceremonies. In most of the townships in Ayeyarwaddy, USDP members are conducting security control in the city, patrolling in the ward, and household inspection, alongside the Junta soldiers. (*Ayeyarwaddy Times*, 2023b)

It is observed that the Junta controls the international relations of political parties. On August 11 2022, the Junta's election commission informed the registered political parties that they need their permission to meet any foreign organization or individual. (*The Irrawaddy, 2022b*) In addition, on August 24 2022, the Junta's election commission posted an instruction that says if any international organization wishes to meet a/the political party(s) in Myanmar, they have to report to their respective country embassy based in Myanmar and that foreign embassy, in turn, have to inform to the Junta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval. (*VOA, 2022*) Communist Party of China invited ANP (Arakan National Party), AFP (Arakan Front Party), SNLD (Shan Nationalities League for Democracy), SNDP (Shan Nationalities Democratic Party) and LNDP (Lisu National Development Party) to 10-day program in China in March 2023. However, the program was postponed as the Junta's election commission has not completed assessing their party registration. (*Narinjara, 2023*) (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2023b*) Mr. Peng Xiubin, director general of the international liaison department of the Communist Party of China could not meet the political parties on his stay in Myanmar from April 16 to 19. (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2023c*)

Switching to the Proportional Representation (PR) system in an illegitimate election will allow the pro-military parties to win more seats in the parliamentary. Given that 25 percent of parliamentary seats are reserved for military personnel provided by the 2008 constitution, it can be considered that the Junta intends to control power with more seats. On the other hand, the Junta officially declared on January 31, 2023 that they have complete control over only 198 townships out of 330 townships throughout the whole country while 67 townships need serious security attention and 65 townships need immediate and effective control. (*ဟန်သစ်, 2023*) The Junta has admitted that they do not have full control over half of the country's territory. It is seen that they are not able to announce the exact date to hold the election. Besides, the military has stopped doing any press conference including the press conference related to the election since December 2022. Reviewing the registration status of 63 candidate political parties, only 38 parties have been approved by the Union Election Commission and the Commission is delaying to finish the assessment for all registrations. Therefore, it can be assumed that although the Junta has been preparing to hold the election, there is no immediate action taken to hold the election in the near future.

Religious and ethnic conflicts and oppression on non-Burmese ethnic have occurred in Myanmar throughout history. Even until today, the Myanmar military has been using the same old tactic of manipulating the differences of race, ethnicity and religion in the community for their own interest and for power. In the spring revolution, intense battles are breaking out between the joint-revolutionary forces (EROs-PDFs) and the Junta in Kachin-Sagaing and Karenni-Shan areas. Pro-military media and military supporters have been spreading propaganda that will cause not only ethnic conflict between Kachin people and Shanni people, between Karenni people and Pa-O people, but also religious conflict between Buddhists and Christians.

Besides, the Junta is trying to inflict religious conflict even in the central region of Myanmar where there is no diverse religion, race and culture, and the revolutionary forces are strong. The

Junta and their supporters¹ are portraying the local revolutionary forces as the terrorists, destroyers of the nation, race and religion, who attack the religious buildings, Buddhist monks and teachers.

The military portrays themselves as “protector of the nation and religion”, and convinces their supporters based on the ideology of protecting race and religion. After the coup, Groups such as “Pyu Saw Htee” and “Thywaythout” that hold ultranationalist and extreme religious values have emerged. Despite the disclaimer from the Junta that they are not behind controlling those groups, posts from Facebook and Telegram reveal that such groups are connected to the Junta and its supporters, pro-military political parties, organizers of pro-military campaigns, ultranationalists and nationalist monks.

The Junta uses its supporters and some local ultranationalist monks who have influence on

1. *Military-backed media, political parties, ultranationalist and nationalist monks*

local people to arm the civilians as local militias in order to receive more recruits of soldiers and to curtail the momentum of revolution. It is seen that Pyithusits are especially formed and based in the central region of Myanmar. In some cases, the military impose threats on civilians to enter into Pyithusit by compulsion. It is observed that "Pyithusit" militias led by local ultranationalist monks have become more powerful. Meanwhile, "Pyu Saw Htee" and "Thwaythout" are backed by the military and are formed based on the ideology of "protecting race and religion." By describing these groups as symbols, the Junta portrays and propagates locally and internationally that there are independent groups in the country with no affiliations and influence of any organization, which oppose the spring revolution. In other words, the Junta has made a propagandising story and reversed the roles of revolutionary forces and Pyithusit militias; revolutionary forces are the terrorists who destroy regional peace and Buddhism while militias and armed groups controlled by the military are the protectors of the local district, race and religion.

The Myanmar Military is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity not only in battle zones but also in the cities. Pyithusit militias are under the COC (chain of command) of the Myanmar military and they have been working noticeably together with the Junta's soldiers. Pyithusit militias members also include in the list of war crimes culprits. Terrorist groups such as "Thwaythout", which the regime denies any involvement with, threaten and assassinate not only the revolutionary forces and supporters, but

also their respective family members. In addition, the military and its security forces, sometimes "Thwaythout" terrorist group, have been arresting and killing the civilians even in stable regions where no battles or conflicts occur, just to spread fear and feeling of insecurity among the people. The military has been using Pyu Saw Htee, Pyithusit militias and Thwaythout as cover to avoid being accountable for their own crimes.

Pyithusit and Pyu Saw Htee militias that often worked with military troops are local people who have knowledge of local terrain and are useful for intelligence and effective military operations. Moreover, It causes a hindrance to revolutionary forces's attempt to build their own local administrative system. Besides, it is observed that the split between local people becomes wider as their conflicts grow more intense regarding the PDFs and the militias armed up by the military. Since the coup, the Junta has been striving to hold an illegitimate election. By switching to the PR system in the election, the military-backed parties will get more seats in the parliament, and the junta aims to maintain their power in the long term by cooperating with the 25 percent of military representatives provided by the 2008 constitution. At present, the military could not manage to set the date to hold the election and to make the preparation to immediately hold an election. In addition, the electoral activities of the aforementioned political parties have not been seen yet. Among the political parties that re-registered for the election, there are at least 27 political parties with ideology of extreme nationalism and religion that supported the

Junta. Most of the other political parties are ethnic parties and there are no parties that received huge public support.

Moreover, for ages, the military has manipulated the peace talks as one of the tricks to play the power politics. In order to prevent the EROs from supporting the Spring Revolution, the military has been making tremendous efforts to curtail the power of revolutionary forces through separate meetings and interest-based incentives. The Junta has undergone not only a collective meeting with EROs, but also private meetings with EROs that are signatories to the NCA; with EROs that are not signatories to the NCA; and separate meetings with each group. The Junta also tried to negotiate with some EROs through international mediation.

In addition, local religious organizations were used by the Junta to facilitate the peace negotiations and cease-fire agreement with EROs. On June 8, 2022, Min Aung Hlaing went to the Nyaung Hna Pin Camp in Hlegu township. The said place is the historical and notorious place where the ruling military regime convened in the national conferences with EROs, from 1993 to 2007, and drafted the 2008 constitution as they wished. Therefore, the above factors are hinting that,

through peace talks and conventions with their closest political groups, pro-military political parties, and EROs, it is possible that the Junta is likely to attempt to maintain power, making amendments to the constitution, in addition to the election.

In striving to solve the entire political crises in Myanmar, including the Spring Revolution, it is needed to see beyond the view that the current crisis and political downfall is due to just the 2020 general election and the coup attempt. It is necessary to see from the bird eye view over the long and complex political conflict between the Myanmar military, which include the majority of Burmese, and revolutionary forces. Furthermore, it is extremely important to be aware of Myanmar military's constant schemes to divide and rule by inflicting religious and ethnic conflicts among different groups and hence, in order to live together peacefully for a long time, it is necessary to avoid any misleading action that will lead to conflicts. A long-term approach and dialogues should be taken for peaceful coexistence among different groups. It should always be carefully considered about ethnic and religious conflicts that happened over the course of history in the process of political negotiations.

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