

# OWAY



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## LONG LIVE THE WORKERS - STUDENTS UNITY

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# **FOREWORD**

## ***OVERCOME THE THE DISASTER TOGETHER AND OVERTHROW THE FASCIST TOGETHER***

### **THE PEOPLE'S SUFFERING**

Now should be a time of rebuilding, Myanmar has entered the year 1387 in its traditional calendar. But this is no new year to celebrate. For the people of Burma, it is a season of grief, of pain, of survival. Across the country, people are bearing a weight of suffering so immense it echoes through history.

Just months after floods and cyclones tore through their homes, another disaster struck: a devastating, historic earthquake. It crushed towns in the Sagaing and Mandalay regions, killing thousands. And it didn't come to a people prepared—it came to a people already buried in poverty, already wounded by crisis. Families lost loved ones. Homes and livelihoods vanished in an instant. The fear of aftershocks lingers. What took a lifetime to build collapsed in minutes.

### **THE MILITARY'S ATROCITIES**

While the country mourned, the regime dropped bombs.

Yes—bombs. Not aid. Not rescue. The world watched in horror. Junta forces delayed rescue efforts until corpses rotted in the rubble. But they never hesitated to resume airstrikes or conscript youth by force. Just hours after the earthquake, warplanes took off. The so-called ceasefire was a lie then, and it remains a lie now.

The junta bombs children. Bombs the elderly. Bombs monks observing religious retreats during Thingyan. They see civilians as enemies. And while the people suffer, the regime tries to whitewash its crimes and charm the international stage with talk of elections. Sham elections. Blood-stained ballots.

### **CAPITULATIONS IDEOLOGY**

Even more dangerous than the military's cruelty is the cowardice of those who urge peace talks with these murderers. These so-called peace brokers ignore the lived reality of the people. The revolutionary forces do not want to "negotiate" with those burning down their homes and massacring their people. The junta does not want peace. It wants submission. It wants power. And it is willing to kill to keep it.

Pushing dialogue in this moment is nothing short of betrayal.

### **UNITY TOWARDS THE END OF THE FASCIST MILITARY DICTATORSHIP**

The entire country suffers. That is the truth. The people are grieving. But they are also resisting.

Yes, the regime bombs. Yes, it kidnaps young people into forced military service. But



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revolutionaries are fighting back. They've captured enemy commanders. They've taken back towns. The junta may regain some ground through foreign interference, like in Laukkaing, but the spirit of resistance only grows stronger.

Let this moment remind us: the oppressed can and will overcome the oppressor. Now is the time to act. Stay on the revolutionary path. Be unshaken. Be uncompromising. Remember the power of unity. Build solidarity. Center the people. Keep moving forward, toward a new system built on dignity, justice, and freedom.

**Oway Editorial Team**





**TOILERS JOIN THE STRUGGLE!**

# **MAY DAY, EVERY DAY: THE STRUGGLES OF WORKERS IN BURMA AND BEYOND**

Ye Baw Min La

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The world we live in, the device you're reading this on, the clothes you wear, and the food you eat are all built by the labor of workers. From the rare earth mines of Burma to the sweatshops in distant corners of the world, every inch of this system is shaped and sustained by working-class hands. Every building, every technological advancement, every product on the shelf, it's all possible because of the workers.

But let's be clear about one thing: the rights are fought for by the workers and privileges enjoyed by the people of imperialist nations are not naturally granted; they come at a price. A price that is paid by the workers of the so-called "Third World," like those in Burma. The lifestyle of the privileged is fueled by our exploitation. Whether it's through the raw materials of the earth or the blood, sweat, and tears of the migrant workers toiling in plantations, factories, and seafood processing plants across Southeast Asia, the system thrives on our suffering.

May Day is not just a day of commemoration, it's a rallying cry. Workers of the world, unite! The struggle for justice is global, and the fight for workers' rights is far from over. We will fight till victory.

## **MAY DAY**

May Day was born out of struggle. It emerged in the late 19th century, fueled by workers' demands for an eight-hour workday and fairer conditions. In 1886, the Haymarket affair in Chicago turned that demand into a battle for survival. Since then, May Day has become a global day of action—a day when workers across the world stand together to resist, to demand, and to fight for a better future.

In Burma, May Day carries an even deeper significance. It's more than a simple celebration of labor—it's a remembrance of the ongoing fight for justice, democracy, and human dignity. The workers in Burma, oppressed by both foreign exploitation and domestic military tyranny, are on the frontlines of this global struggle. May Day is the day to remember them, but also the day to unite and continue the battle for our collective liberation.



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## **THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT: WORKERS RISING AGAINST OPPRESSION**

When Myanmar's military junta seized power in 2021. But instead of submitting to this tyranny, the workers of Burma launched the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)—a nationwide general strike that shut down key sectors of the economy. Teachers, doctors, civil servants, and workers from all walks of life refused to cooperate with the military regime. They sacrificed their jobs, their livelihoods, and even their lives to fight for democracy and justice.

The CDM wasn't just a protest—it was a revolution in action. It was the refusal of workers to accept oppression, the assertion of their power, and the fight for the rights that had been stripped away. And while the military junta may have hoped to crush this resistance, they underestimated the power of the people. Workers will never be silenced. This is what May Day represents now: a continued battle for democracy, for justice, for the future.

## **THE BOC OIL WORKERS' STRIKE: A LEGACY OF RESISTANCE**

The struggle of workers in Burma didn't start with the 2021 coup, it stretches back to the days of colonialism. In 1938, Burmese oil workers at the Burma Oil Company (BOC) went on strike against their British imperialist overlords. They faced horrific working conditions, dangerous labor, long hours, and meager wages, but they refused to be exploited. The BOC strike was a powerful symbol of resistance against imperialism and a critical moment in Burma's national struggle.

In the fire of the BOC oil workers' strike, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions

(ABFSU) was also forged. It was here that the student movement gained its ideological foundation, uniting with the broader struggle of the working class. The ABFSU, built on the ideals of resistance and unity, would go on to play a crucial role in Burma's political landscape for decades. It laid the groundwork for the struggles that would come, especially the 1988 uprising, when students once again led the charge for change.

The BOC strike not only showed that workers are the heart of revolution but also proved that student unions, deeply rooted in the working class's struggles, could be a driving force for political change. Today, the legacy of that struggle continues to

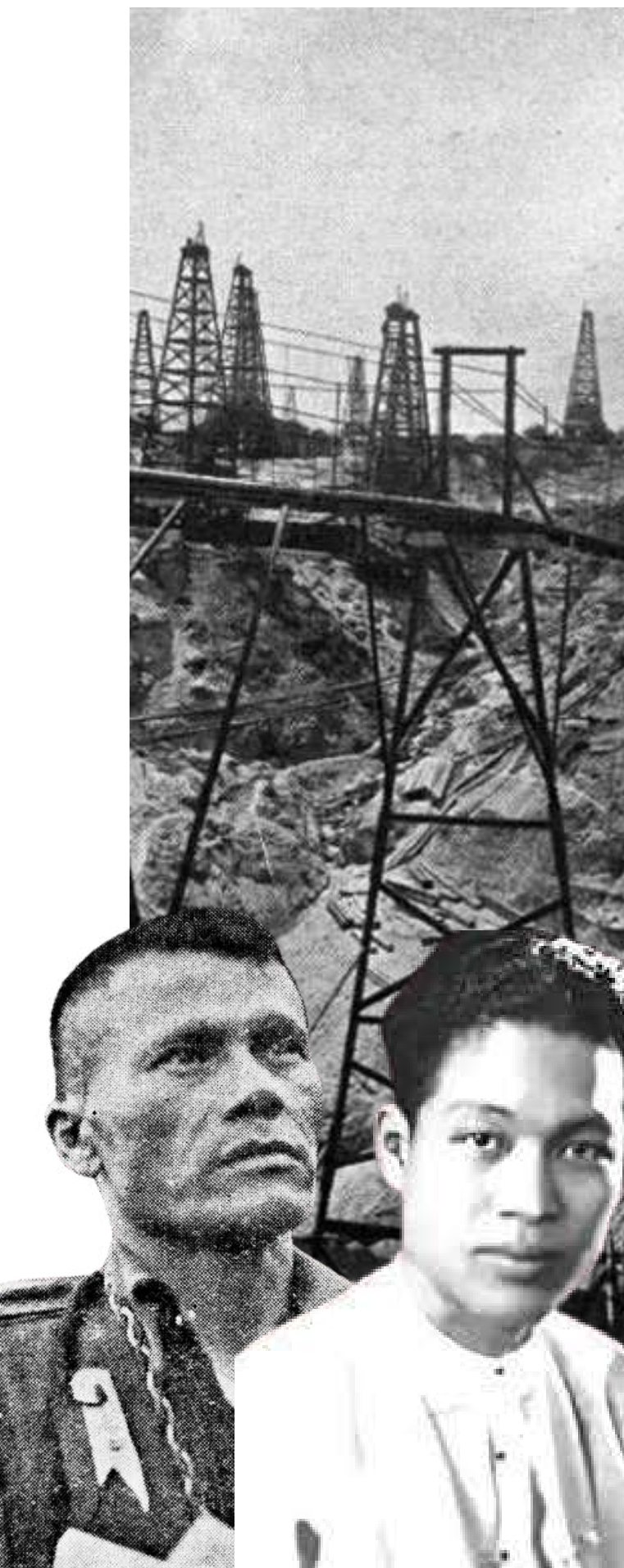
fuel Burma's fight for sovereignty, self-determination, and justice.

The student unions in Burma have long drawn inspiration from the international workers' movement, recognizing that their fight is one and the same.

May Day serves as a reminder of the power of unity. The workers and the students are part of the same struggle. The fight for democracy, the fight for justice, the fight against oppression—they are all interconnected. The success of one is tied to the success of the other. **Workers and students must stand together**—our power is in our unity, and the fight cannot be won in isolation.

## **MIGRANT WORKERS: THE INVISIBLE WORKFORCE**

Burmese migrant workers are essential to the economies of Southeast Asia, laboring in industries ranging from rubber plantations and sugar fields to seafood processing factories, construction sites, and shipping industries. Despite their



critical role in producing the goods and services that fuel the global economy, they remain largely invisible, often toiling in harsh, dangerous, and exploitative conditions.

Whether working in the fields, factories, or aboard ships, Burmese workers face overcrowded and unsafe living conditions, long hours, meager wages, and a lack of basic rights or protections. In the shipping industry, many are forced into cramped containers or poorly maintained ships, with little regard for their safety or well-being. In agriculture and manufacturing, they often work in conditions of debt bondage, where their wages are withheld or their labor is extracted under threat of violence or further abuse.

These workers are integral to the production of goods that reach global markets—from the seafood we consume, the rubber used in our cars, to the textiles in our clothes. Yet, their suffering is largely erased from the consumer narrative, as the very goods that enrich global corporations are built on the backs of those who are left behind.

Despite the brutal exploitation they endure, these workers are still fighting. They resist a system that profits from their pain, organizing to demand fair wages, better working conditions, and dignity. The global demand for cheap goods, whether clothing, electronics, seafood, or palm oil, is fueled by the labor of migrant workers across Southeast Asia. While workers are worked to the bone by their bosses, the Myanmar military, instead of aiding the migrant workers, imposes a 25% tax on their hard-earned income. The workers of Burma are no longer willing to remain silent. The fight for justice and equality



continues as migrant workers, from agriculture to shipping to construction, unite and challenge the systems that keep them oppressed.

### **WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE**

The struggles of the workers in Burma are part of a much larger global movement. From the BOC oil workers strike to CDM, from the student uprisings to the struggles of migrant workers, we share the same enemy: a system that profits from our labor and oppresses our voices. May Day is the day to unite, to resist, and to demand justice.

This fight is not just about Burma, it's about workers everywhere. It's about the global struggle for justice, for dignity, and for the rights of all workers. Workers of the world, unite! The fight for a better world starts today.

### **CONCLUSION**

May Day is not just a commemoration of past victories—it is a call to arms. The workers of Burma have shown that resistance is possible. From the BOC oil workers to the CDM, the legacy of struggle lives on. The fight for justice is far from over. It is a global fight, and we must continue the work started by those who came before us.

**WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! THE STRUGGLE FOR A BETTER WORLD IS OURS TO WIN.**





# THE MULTICOLORED SUFFERING OF BURMESE WORKERS IN THAILAND

Aung Sit Paing

When we hear someone say, “They are working in Thailand,” it makes us think on the surface, “This person is working abroad. Compared to those in our country, their life must be more comfortable and more stable.” That is the assumption that comes to mind.

In fact, in terms of the economy and standard of living, working abroad does offer a certain degree of relief when compared to the dangerous and deteriorating situation in Burma.

However, the suffering experienced by Burmese migrant workers in Thailand is by no means small. From the moment they leave their own country and arrive in another, they are subjected to that country’s laws and regulations.

Migrant workers living and working in Thailand must further endure the multicolored oppression and exploitative practices of the Thai government, authorities, and business owners.

## **MIGRANT WORKERS BEFORE THE 2021 MILITARY COUP**

Before the military coup in 2021, there were over two million legal Burmese migrant workers working in Thailand, and

more than one million undocumented workers. Combined, there were over three million, according to a statement released by the National Unity Government (NUG).

After the coup, due to the ongoing instability within the country, the number of people migrating to Thailand to live and work has almost doubled.

Following the rise of unlawful military conscriptions and arrests, people began fleeing in groups to neighboring countries, including Thailand.

According to a report by the Burma Affairs & Conflict Study, during just the first week of the military conscription campaign, over twenty thousand people inside Burma had applied for Thai visas.

## **3D WORKERS IN THAILAND**

Among the millions of people who have migrated from Burma to Thailand, only a small portion are able to live and work comfortably.

The majority of these migrant workers are referred to as 3D workers. This means they are assigned to jobs that are difficult, dirty, and dangerous.

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These are the three main types of jobs that migrant workers are usually expected to do.

Aside from these three types of jobs, there are no other options available to them. In addition, the Thai government does not provide legal work permits for such jobs.

Most of these workers end up doing low-level, labor-intensive jobs that Thai citizens are either unwilling or unable to perform. They mainly work in industries such as construction, factories, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

When accidents happen and people are injured or killed, it is usually Burmese workers who are the victims. A recent example occurred on the 28th of last month when an earthquake caused a building under construction near Chatuchak Market in Bangkok to collapse. The building had 30 floors.

Most of those who were injured or killed were Burmese construction workers. As of April 5, according to the official report from Thai authorities, 103 people were missing due to the building collapse. So far, 15 people have been confirmed dead.

Even the compensation that should be given to the families of the deceased workers is not easily accessible.

One reason is that some of the deceased construction workers were undocumented. Another reason is that under Thai law, compensation can only be received if the workers had been enrolled in the social security program before they died.

In truth, the idea of compensation is like a

situation where the government and employers first deduct money from the workers and then return only a small portion. It is like frying fish with its own oil.

A young undocumented migrant worker who paints walls in Thailand said, "How could life be good? We are just grinding it out like this."

### **THAI GOVERNMENT'S OPPRESSIVE POLICIES AND THE OPPRESSED MIGRANTS**

The Thai government does not allow non-Thai citizens to engage in any major business activities. They are not even allowed to sell goods on the roadside.



Burmese vendors who sell on the roadside are arrested even in major cities like Bangkok. In places like Mae Sot Market, when Thai immigration officers known as "Tor-Mor" enter the market, all the Burmese roadside vendors have to abandon their stalls and flee in a panic. When these officers arrive, they arrest any Burmese migrants they find and load them onto vehicles.

Recently, the authorities have been conducting more aggressive arrests, which has caused great fear among Burmese vendors. A vendor from Mae Sot named Ko Kyaw Win (name changed) said, "I was just going to the market when I got arrested on the street. They used three vehicles to make the arrests. About ten of them came.



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I didn't know who they were. They loaded me into the vehicle. It was only after arriving at the office that I realized they were Thai intelligence officers. They even arrested someone who had just been smoking in front of his house. They stopped everyone they met and checked them. If they couldn't find any evidence, they still arrested them."

The Thai government enforces one-sided laws, rules, and strict regulations for Burmese migrants. However, in practice, these laws do not work effectively. They are neither consistent nor fair. Although the government issues laws from the top, corruption and misconduct are widespread at the ground level. For example, according to official Thai policy, it is illegal for Burmese people to sell goods. So, if Burmese people want to sell things, they have to pay monthly bribes to the local Thai police. In places like Mae Sot, this practice is very common. Even small vendors selling boiled beans by the roadside, as well as those running tea shops, food stalls, barber shops, beauty salons, clothing shops, and general stores, all have to pay bribes depending on the size of their businesses.

There are millions of undocumented Burmese migrants in Thailand. In order to live, travel, and work, they are constantly subjected to exploitation by local Thai police based on their undocumented status. For undocumented migrants, it has reached a point where they must treat the corrupt police as benefactors. As long as they can pay money, undocumented migrants can move around, live, and eat just like Thai citizens. If they can pay tens of thousands of baht, even undocumented people can travel to places like Bangkok or Chiang Mai, and the police themselves will escort them in patrol cars.

However, those undocumented Burmese migrants who cannot afford to pay are arrested on the streets, handcuffed, and taken to the police station. At the station, they are charged with various offenses and pressured through interpreters to pay bribes. Before demanding the bribe, the officers lecture them about behaving properly, respecting Thai laws and regulations, and acting like good civil servants. After that, they extract the bribe money in various ways, which is in itself a violation of the law. Many migrants who end up at the police station are threatened like this: "If you can't pay the amount we ask, we'll take you to court, imprison you, and then deport you to Burma. Do you want to end up in the hands of the military council?" Among those who help interpret for the police during these arrests are some opportunists who act just like collaborators. They behave like obedient servants toward the authorities. They scold and intimidate the arrested migrants, negotiating higher bribes for the benefit of the police. The bribe money is then shared between the Thai police and these interpreters. Among the Burmese migrant community, such interpreters are commonly referred to as "police dogs."





### **INCREASING PRESSURE FROM THE THAI GOVERNMENT**

Recently, the Thai government has been handling Burmese migrants with increasingly harsh and strict measures. There has been a growing trend of rounding up undocumented Burmese migrants in Thailand and deporting them back to Burma, where they are handed over to the military regime. After being deported from Thailand, some of these returnees are forced into military conscription by the junta.

A Deputy Minister from the National Unity Government (NUG), Ko Kyaw Ni, said, "Some of the deportees are released after their families pay money to the military council. But those who cannot pay are sent directly into military service. We do not know exactly what happens after that, as they are taken into army camps. But we estimate that at least two to three thousand people deported from Thailand have been forced into military service."

As of now, on March 19, the Thai Immigration Office in the southern region of Ranong issued a statement confirming that 250 undocumented Burmese migrants who had been detained were deported back to Burma.

A recently deported Burmese migrant from Mae Sot shared their experience, saying, "We had to leave the Thai Immigration Office at around 5 a.m. and arrived at the border at about 6 a.m. After checking our numbers, they sent us to the other side. There were many people. Whenever they carry out arrests, there are at least 200 or 300 Burmese people in one group. After arriving at BGF (Border Guard Force) control, they separated us by where we had been caught. Those arrested in Bangkok were put in one group. Those caught on the Malaysia route were kept separately. That is how BGF sorted us out."

Due to this situation, Burmese activists overseas are now organizing protests in front of Thai embassies around the world. For example, on March 13, a protest was held in front of the Thai Embassy in Washington D.C., United States. On March 4, the National Unity Government (NUG) officially called on neighboring countries not to return detained Burmese people to the military regime but instead to provide them with shelter and support.

### **BUSINESS OWNERS PROTECTED BY THEIR GOVERNMENT**

Migrant Burmese workers living in Thailand are also forced to endure exploitation by business owners who profit from their labor. When these workers feel dissatisfied with the unfair treatment they receive, it is extremely difficult for them to raise their voices or demand their rights.

Government tools such as the Department of Employment, the police, the military, and bureaucratic institutions act in favor of the employers and do not hesitate to violently crack down on workers' protests, even in public view. For example, about four months ago, a series of protests broke out in factories across Thailand where Burmese migrant workers were employed.

These protests were against the exploitative practices of factory owners and brokers who were deducting unfair fees from the workers' wages.

Ko Wayan Htun, a labor leader who participated in the protests, said, "We were only gathering outside the factory, peacefully. What we said was just to ask the employers and brokers to reduce the unfair deductions they were taking from us. We didn't shout, we didn't scream. There were no fights, no weapons. Everyone was sitting calmly."

At that moment, factory owners had already called the police and local security forces. They arrived at the protest site. Ko Wayan Htun was working at a Thai steel factory called Bis Pipe, located in Maha Chai, Ohn Nwe Ohn Yine. About 300 workers at that factory protested together against the factory owner. "They ordered us to go back, but we refused. Some people stood still. Some people sat down. At that moment, they grabbed four of us who were leading the protest. When they arrested one person from the crowd, the rest of the workers pulled that person back to stop the arrest.

The authorities then pulled out batons and beat everyone who tried to resist. They showed electric batons and threatened us. Then, I was grabbed by the neck and arrested. Once I was on the vehicle, they handcuffed me very tightly," said Ko Wayan Htun, describing how he was violently arrested during the protest. At that time, it wasn't just one factory. In fact, similar protests were emerging quietly in about fifteen different places across Thailand. U Khine Gyi, the chairperson of the AAC alliance, which works on migrant worker issues in Thailand, said, "These worker protests have happened in about fifteen townships already. Many of them

are visible online. On some days, two factories protest at the same time. These factories don't just have fifty or sixty workers. Inside, there are hundreds of workers protesting together."



At that time, it was not just Ko Wayan Htun's factory where such incidents took place. In approximately fifteen different places across Thailand, protests by migrant workers quietly began to emerge. "These kinds of protests have now taken place in about fifteen townships. You can see many of them online. On some days, there are protests at two factories in a single day. Those factories don't just have fifty or sixty workers. There are hundreds of workers protesting inside each one," said U Khine Gyi, the chairperson of the AAC alliance group that works on Burmese migrant worker issues in Thailand. These protests began around the end of 2024, when the Thai government launched a program allowing Burmese nationals living in Thailand, along with citizens from three other countries, to legally stay and work.

Under this program, people who already had legal documents such as the pink card, work permit, or CI were required to extend them, and those without such documents had to apply for new ones. The main reason why protests spread widely among factory workers was that factory owners and brokers were demanding excessive fees from migrant workers for renewing their documents. These fees were far



higher than the standard rates, allowing them to profit unfairly. Moreover, the Thai government had not clearly announced the official fees or costs required to process the documents. As a result, factory owners brought brokers into the factories, taking advantage of the situation to exploit the workers financially.

Because they could not accept this kind of exploitation, Ko Wayan Htun, a labor leader from one of the factories, stood up in front of the remaining workers to protest. As a result, he was violently arrested by the Thai authorities and was also fired by his employer. In connection with the protest, more than ten other workers were also dismissed from their jobs. The owner of the Bis Pipe factory was not satisfied with just suppressing the protest. He appeared determined to make an example out of migrant Burmese workers like Ko Wayan Htun who dared to stand up to him, to serve as a warning to others. "Right now, I am hiding in a different room. I can no longer stay safely in my own room either. I heard that the factory owner has been asking about the homes and rooms of the protest leaders. Among those who were fired, one or two have been taken back by the employer. Those people are now being persuaded to side with the employer and are being used to find out where I am hiding. They have been asking around and investigating. Because of that, I no longer feel safe, so for now, I am staying in hiding," said Ko Wayan Htun.

### **A GOVERNMENT THAT HAS NO SHAME CRUSHING THE HELPLESS**

To support and stand by unlawfully oppressed migrant workers, there are some Burmese labor rights organizations active in Thailand. However, these organizations are also being harshly suppressed by the Thai government. Most

recently, the AAC Workers Assistance Shelter, which had been helping Burmese migrants in Thailand for over nine years, was raided and shut down by Thai authorities in March.



"They arrested 51 workers, saying that our shelter was not officially registered in Thailand. They claimed that housing and caring for that many workers was not allowed. Because of this, our AAC shelter was targeted and punished. After the arrests and fines, on March 20, they posted an official notice stating that the building was not legally compliant and ordered our AAC shelter to shut down," said U Khine Gyi, one of the three founders of the AAC alliance and its chairperson.

It is reported that the order to shut down the AAC shelter came directly from the chief administrator of Thailand's Samut Sakhon District. On the day the raid occurred, a full force consisting of local police, Thai immigration officers, ward administrators, township officials, municipal staff, and various departmental teams entered the shelter. They arrested 51 workers who had arrived under the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) labor agreement. After that, those responsible for operating the AAC shelter — including both staff and individual workers — were fined. The total amount of the fine reached nearly 300,000 baht, which is around 1.8 million kyats in Burmese currency.

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In shutting down the shelter that was helping workers, Thai authorities claimed that the AAC center had not been officially registered according to Thai law and that the workers living there had not been properly reported on the guest list.. That was the reason they gave. However, during the nine years that the AAC shelter had been operating, although they had faced some challenges in the past, they had never experienced arrests, fines, and a complete shutdown like this before.

“Being hit with fines and now facing a complete shutdown is something that only started happening this year. We suspect it is politically motivated.

The reason is that our AAC shelter has recently been involved in social work and charitable activities. We also provide strong support for the Burmese revolution. They probably gathered information about us and concluded that we are involved in the revolution. That is why we believe they came to shut us down. We suspect that pressure was applied by the Burmese military council,” said AAC leader U Khine Gyi. The AAC shelter that was recently shut down had been active in labor rights for nine years. According to U Khine Gyi, the shelter cared for thousands of workers every month. Each year, AAC was able to help about ten injured migrant workers receive compensation averaging around 1 million baht per person. Before the shelter was closed, hundreds of Burmese migrant workers from different regions had been taking refuge there. Among them were workers who had come under the MOU labor agreement but never received their wages, workers who had lost their jobs, and individuals who had suffered severe injuries in the workplace — such as amputations or spinal damage — and were left physically disabled without any compensation.

In Burma, people are facing the grave dangers of the unjust military conscription law, ongoing war, lack of job opportunities, a collapsed economy, and no access to education. Because of these reasons, millions of Burmese people have decided to migrate to Thailand, hoping to live and work there. They left their homeland with desperation and hope. However, once they arrive in Thailand, they still cannot find peace. They are oppressed by the Thai government, subjected to control and coercion by authorities like the police and immigration, and exploited by employers. They are forced to endure all this hardship. Moreover, the Thai government is not content with targeting Burmese migrants alone. It is now collaborating with the Burmese military council to further oppress them.

What urgently needs to be pointed out here is that the Thai government’s recent crackdown on Burmese migrants has become increasingly severe. Some people are now saying it is because the migrants do not behave properly, and that they must respect the laws and follow the rules of another country. These kinds of simplistic, apolitical statements are being repeated by certain long-time residents in Thailand who are cunning and opportunistic, self-proclaimed intellectuals, pretentious people, and celebrity-like figures.



On the surface, their words may sound reasonable. But when compared to everything discussed above, it becomes clear that their statements are meant to obscure the real issue. They try to avoid recognizing that Burmese migrants in Thailand are suffering from systemic oppression and exploitation. They hide behind the excuse of law and order while turning a blind eye to the unjust acts carried out by the Thai government.

The lives of Burmese migrant workers currently living in Thailand remain unprotected and unsupported. No government or international organization has yet taken effective and responsible action to address the situation on the ground. No one has stepped forward to take real responsibility or provide a solution.







# IMMIGRANT WORKERS AND BURMESE STUDENTS RISE UP AGAINST EXPLOITATION AT SUBWAY FRANCHISES IN SAN FRANCISCO

Ye Baw Maung Lin

In San Francisco, a fierce battle is unfolding as Burmese students and immigrant workers, many of them with no work permits, are fighting back against a system that has long exploited them at local Subway franchises. These workers, struggling to survive in a city where the cost of living continues to climb, are speaking out about rampant wage theft, unpaid overtime, and inhumane working conditions. But the time for silence is over. Enough is enough.

## **WAGE THEFT AND LABOR VIOLATIONS: A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM**

At Subway locations across the city, workers have been paid as little as \$13 an hour, while California's minimum wage for fast food workers is \$20. But the exploitation doesn't stop there. These workers, who are fighting just to get by, have been denied overtime, sick pay, tip earnings, and even basic rights like proper breaks. This is not a mistake; it is a systemic issue. Subway franchise owners are intentionally squeezing every last penny out of these workers, knowing they can get away with it because many of them are immigrants with limited English skills and no work permits.

Reports are coming in from seven Subway franchises, where employees, including

Burmese students, have faced manipulated time records, stolen wages, and abusive working conditions. Some workers have been denied wages altogether, leaving them vulnerable and powerless. This isn't just a case of underpayment. This is theft. This is exploitation.

## **Wage Theft and Labor Violations: A Systemic Problem**

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## THE REAL COST OF SILENCE: IMMIGRANT WORKERS SPEAK OUT

Workers like Roxana Garcia, a former Subway employee from Mexico, are speaking out about the abuses they suffered, realizing too late that they were being taken advantage of. Garcia worked long hours, often without breaks, only to find her paychecks falling short of what she had earned. “I’m here today to make a change,” Garcia declared. “No more silence. No more exploitation.” Garcia quit her job after realizing the depth of the wage theft and joined forces with TUWU to demand justice—not just for herself, but for all workers suffering under the same system of abuse.



Ilsi Rivas, a current Subway employee from Guatemala, shared her story of being exploited without even knowing it. When she first arrived in San Francisco, she had no idea how to read her pay stubs, which were in English. But after learning to read and noticing discrepancies in her pay, she began to speak out and ask her coworkers about their experiences. “I was afraid to speak up,” Rivas confessed, “but now I’m fighting for change. Workers shouldn’t have to be afraid of speaking out.” Rivas’ courage has inspired others, and her story is one of many that fuels the growing movement for justice.



## SOLIDARITY AND POWER: WORKERS AND ALLIES UNITE

This is more than just a fight for back wages. This is a fight for dignity, for respect, and for workers to be treated like human beings instead of tools to increase profits. The rally outside City Hall was not just a protest—it was a declaration that workers will no longer tolerate exploitation. The fight for workers’ rights is not limited to Subway locations. It is a fight that will resonate across the city and beyond.

Support for the workers has been pouring in. Win-Mon Kyi, a member of the Myanmar Student Union Daly City [ABFSU], joined the rally in solidarity. “We need to fight for their rights—worker rights, human rights,” Win declared. Local politicians, including District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston, also spoke out, vowing to stand by the workers.

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“We do not tolerate wage theft. We do not tolerate the violation of workers’ rights,” Preston said, making it clear that San Francisco will not stand idly by while workers are abused.

### **THE ONGOING BATTLE: HOLDING SUBWAY ACCOUNTABLE**

While Subway corporate has promised to investigate the issue, the workers and their advocates aren’t satisfied with just an investigation. They are demanding systemic change. Subway franchise owners must be held accountable, not just for back wages, but for the ongoing exploitation that continues in these stores. These workers are tired of being silenced by a system that profits from their hardship. Enough is enough.

The rally and legal actions are part of a broader movement for justice. Workers across the city are uniting against exploitation, and the movement is only gaining momentum. This is just the beginning—these workers are fighting for more than wages. They are fighting for the right to be treated with respect, the right to fair treatment, and the right to live without fear of retaliation.

### **CONCLUSION: THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE WILL NOT STOP**

The struggle for justice is far from over. Subway workers, including Burmese students and other immigrants, are raising their voices, and they won’t stop until they get what they deserve. The fight for fair wages, the end of wage theft, and the right to safe working conditions is a fight for every worker.

These workers are showing the world that when we stand together, we have the power to demand change. The fight continues, and we will not rest until justice is served.







## RETURNING FROM DEATH'S DOOR

Hannay | Aung Sit Paing

"I still can't believe I managed to get out alive."

These are the heartfelt words of a survivor who was trapped under the rubble for six hours after an eight-story building collapsed due to an earthquake.

On the 28th, alongside the quake, the eight-story E-outfitting Golden Country Hotel in Mandalay also collapsed. Ma Mu Mu, one of the hotel staff, had been working inside the office before the tragedy struck.

Around 1:00 PM, shortly after Ma Mu Mu and her three colleagues returned to their office after lunch, the earthquake began to shake the building. As soon as they sensed it, they crawled under their desks and within moments, they heard a deafening crash and realized the ceiling of the building had collapsed. Suddenly, everything around them went completely dark.

Later, they would learn that a 7.7 magnitude earthquake had struck, causing the building to collapse.

"Our building had eight floors, but only five remained above us. The ground floor, first, second, and third floors had all collapsed," said Ma Mu Mu.

Trapped under the collapsed structure, they immediately tried to call out and check who among them was still conscious. Of the three others, only two responded. One person didn't answer at all. They tried shouting for help, but no response came from outside.

"At first, we screamed for help. But eventually, we couldn't scream anymore. The other two women started banging on things to make noise instead," Ma Mu Mu explained.

Despite the chaos, Ma Mu Mu stayed alert and began assessing her surroundings. Fortunately, because they had just come back from lunch, they still had their phones with them, allowing them to use the light to inspect the area.

Soon, water began seeping into the collapsed space. Desperate, they pulled out paper from a nearby paper box and laid it on the floor. The space they were trapped in was extremely cramped and filled with cement dust, making it hard to breathe. Debris was hanging precariously above them, and with continuous aftershocks shaking the rubble, they were in constant fear that more could collapse at any moment.

About an hour later, they heard voices from

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their office colleagues outside. Hearing that, they began shouting again and banging on nearby objects to signal their presence.

“One of us managed to get a message through to someone outside. We all sent messages to everyone in our phones, saying, ‘We’re trapped. Please rescue us,’ and included our exact address,” said Ma Mu Mu.

Although they had phones, the signal was too weak to make calls, and messages barely went through. After about an hour, one message from one of them finally reached the general manager, who replied that help was on the way. After that message, there was no further communication.

“The first to come and help us were our own office colleagues. They did everything they could. But of course, there was a limit to what they could do with the tools they had,” she said.

Realizing the severity of the situation, the office staff contacted professional rescue teams. These teams, working together with the hotel employees and equipped with necessary tools, eventually managed to break through and rescue those trapped. Ma Mu Mu will never forget the help her colleagues gave her that day.

“There were four of us trapped. Only three of us made it out. One woman was left behind. As soon as we got out, we begged them to go back and get her. But her location was inaccessible,” Ma Mu Mu said.

Before the quake, the four women had been working together as usual. But when the building collapsed, a massive slab of debris split them apart — trapping Ma Nu Nu, one of their team, on the other side.

Ma Nu Nu waited, hoping someone would come to rescue her. But that hope never became reality. The rescue team later confirmed that she had passed away.

In a nearby room, another colleague, Ma Ju Ju, was also trapped. At first, they could hear her calling and banging — but then, there was silence. She too, did not survive.

“I can’t imagine what my sisters went through. For Ma Nu Nu, to be stuck alone on that side... I can’t imagine how scared she must have been,” Ma Mu Mu said, her voice breaking with emotion.

Ma Mu Mu herself suffered dental injuries, her teeth knocked out from being crushed between a chair and fallen debris. One of the survivors had severe facial burns, and all of them bore painful bruises and lacerations, though none were life-threatening.

“The worst injury wasn’t physical. It was mental. That can’t be healed. I can’t sleep at night. I can’t eat. Every time I fall asleep, it feels like the earthquake is happening all over again. This is the worst nightmare of my life,” said Ma Mu Mu, describing the **psychological trauma** she now lives with.

“Am I really alive?” — that question still lingers in Ma Mu Mu’s mind, a question without a clear answer.



# SHAKEN BUT UNBROKEN: THE EARTHQUAKE, THE JUNTA, AND THE REVOLUTION IN BURMA

Min Htet

March 28, 2025, marked a historic day that will remain etched in the collective memory of the Burmese people. On that fateful day, a powerful earthquake struck unexpectedly, shaking the land with the force of nature's fury, just as the people of Myanmar had already been enduring the hardships brought on by decades of military rule. This was not a mere tremor, but a force that tore through the country, bringing tragedy to every corner.

Burma had already faced four devastating natural disasters during these four years under military rule, the hardest struggle that people had faced would be this recent Sagaing earthquake. Yet, the people continued to rise above these challenges with determination.

While Myanmar had weathered the storms of the past—both literal and metaphorical—the longer-lasting damage came from the military dictatorship. The people had to fight not just natural disasters but also an oppressive, 70-year rule of military dominance that crushed their spirits. However, the Burmese people are not a people to be cowed by adversity. They are resilient, determined, and they will continue to fight on.

Even in the face of continued hardship, the

people of Myanmar have never stopped pushing forward. They rise again like a phoenix emerging from the ashes, ready to fight against any challenge. Throughout history, they have faced oppression and emerged victorious time and again, and the current struggle will be no different. This is the people's historical demand for freedom, a cry for justice that will continue until the military dictatorship is overthrown.

## SAGAING EARTHQUAKE AFTER ONE MONTH

On March 28, the powerful Sagaing earthquake, registering at magnitude 7.7, marked one month of the tragedy. This earthquake is now remembered as one of the second most powerful in the country's history, with over 3,700 fatalities, 5,000 injuries, and more than 100 people missing. The destruction was widespread, with historic buildings, schools, homes, and vital infrastructure all reduced to rubble. The worst-hit areas included Mandalay, Sagaing, Shan State, and Nay Pyi Taw.

In the period of this month, the people of Myanmar have faced immense hardships. Over 9 million people were affected by the disaster, the majority of whom were ordinary citizens. Many lost their homes and their livelihoods, and some lost their families and relatives in the devastating aftermath. The



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destruction was felt not only in the cities but also in rural areas, where the lack of basic supplies, including food, water, and shelter, further exacerbated the suffering.

Among the devastation and losses, it was not only the homes of the people that were destroyed, but also the military offices and facilities, particularly in Naypyidaw, the capital, and the Mandalay military headquarters. The military junta has not released any public statements about their losses up until today. Some of the government staff have been reported dead, due to the earthquake. The homes of Naypyidaw civil servants collapsed, military offices, and government buildings were severely damaged. Observing the situation of General Min Aung Hlaing's responses and expressions, it is clear that the military is also severely affected by the earthquake. Similarly, AAPP(Assistance Association for Political Prisoners) reported that there have been a death of 12 prisoners, among 6 of them are political prisoners in Mandalay Obo Prison, as a result of the quake. Despite this, the military junta has not issued any official reports or updates regarding these casualties.

Over the course of the past month, cities such as Mandalay and Sagaing have not yet begun rebuilding efforts. The collapsed buildings have not been clarified or reconstructed. Bridges and roads used for transportation are yet to be repaired. The rural areas are facing even worse challenges. There is a lack of donations, with some villages struggling with limited access to food, water, and basic human resources. As of now, these affected people in earthquake-hit regions continue to endure these hardships. Meanwhile, the junta's media outlets, focused on promoting their own agendas, report about donations and the military's efforts, but in

terms of actual ground-level impact, no significant change has been observed. The oppressed people of Burma, are the only one itself that have been resolving these difficulties by relying on one another, helping each other as best as they can.

### **WHAT IS THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT DOING?**

The question on many minds is what the military junta has been doing in response to the disaster. The answer is clear. Instead of helping the suffering people, they are waging war against them.

While the junta releases statements calling for rescue efforts and national unity in response to the earthquake, the reality on the ground tells a different story. Bombs continue to rain down across the country—from the mountains to the plains and even near border areas. Worse still, they've even started using modern paramotors to carry out airstrikes.



Just hours after the earthquake struck, the military dropped bombs on Naung Cho township in Shan State, Chaung-U township in Sagaing Region, Pakokku in Magway Region, and Phyu in Bago Region. Despite international media reports and condemnation from global organizations, the junta continues its internal war under the guise of a ceasefire. To them, anyone who dies is collateral damage, and the war must go on.

On March 27, during the Armed Forces Day

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parade commemorating the 80th anniversary of the military, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech filled with militaristic rhetoric. His call to "military victory" was essentially a green light for soldiers and militia to kill and crush opposition with impunity. Historically, for the junta, the people of Myanmar—oppressed and suppressed—have always been seen as enemies.

So, when lives were lost and destruction swept across the country due to the earthquake, the regime showed no empathy. In fact, they may have found satisfaction in the public's suffering. The disaster didn't deter their military ambitions—it only reinforced them. For the junta to survive, they need the people to be weakened and fractured. These acts are not random—they are deliberate crimes committed with intent. The oppressors will never protect the oppressed and that is a truth.

On April 2, the junta suddenly announced a 20-days ceasefire. Many analysts believe this was due to pressure from China, after junta soldiers opened fire on a Chinese rescue convoy on April 1. This ceasefire came after the National Unity Government (NUG) declared a ceasefire on March 31, followed by the Brotherhood Alliance on April 1. Only then did the junta respond with their own ceasefire announcement, claiming it was to aid in earthquake relief.

However, within just a day of that announcement, the military launched new assaults and airstrikes in Kachin State. At this point, it is no longer a question of whether their ceasefire is genuine—it's clear it isn't. Media outlets have reported that from the date of the junta's ceasefire announcement until May 1, there were over 400 documented attacks.

During this earthquake disaster, the junta has done little to provide meaningful assistance to earthquake victims. In Mandalay, they set up a few makeshift tents. Around Naypyidaw, there were small-scale donations and appearances at collapsed buildings. That's all. General Min Aung Hlaing himself, two weeks after the earthquake, on April 11, he went to Taunggyi and made an unimportant pilgrimage to the Pagoda and performed a ritual offering.

There's a Burmese proverb: *"If you don't want to help, don't interfere."*

But the junta did worse—they obstructed help. They blocked youth-led humanitarian rescue groups, arrested volunteers, and specifically stopped aid from reaching Sagaing Region, which has become a stronghold of resistance. In fact, the junta resents Sagaing so deeply that military spokesperson Zaw Min Tun even tried to rebrand the earthquake as the "Mandalay Earthquake" instead of the "Sagaing Earthquake."

Worst of all, the junta restricted access for international media and aid organizations. They are actively trying to blackout coverage of the crisis, keeping the world from seeing the full extent of the devastation and their own negligence. But the technology and the widespread media is not a thing they can cover up anymore.



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## INTERNATIONAL AID

Throughout Myanmar's history, successive military regimes have exhibited a persistent fear of foreigners — a condition known as **xenophobia**. This fear is not without motive. The junta aims to hide the brutal oppression and systematic control it imposes on the country and its people from international eyes. By rejecting international media and restricting certain humanitarian aid, the regime ensures that the outside world remains unaware of the suffering endured by ordinary citizens under military rule.

This pattern is not new. During Cyclone Nargis in 2008 — which killed over 130,000 people — the military regime under Senior General Than Shwe severely restricted international aid and blocked foreign journalists from entering the country. Their primary concern was to not get disrupted by the Nargis disaster to their 2008 Constitution, which was being drafted at the time and formed the backbone of their power. As a result, the constitution was pushed through while the country was still reeling from the natural disaster, with tens of thousands of citizens' lives lost or in peril.

However, under the current regime led by Min Aung Hlaing, an unusual move occurred: on the very same day the March 28 earthquake struck, the junta leader directly called for international assistance. As a result, Myanmar received more than **USD 138 million** in aid from 24 countries. Only with the domestic emergency and defense funds, this amount should be enough to carry out effective disaster relief and reconstruction. With this amount of international aid, it is possible for creating long-term improvements and national development.

Yet, from the perspective of ordinary, compassionate citizens, such hopes are quickly dashed. For military leaders operating within a brutal authoritarian framework, humanitarian relief is never a genuine priority.

So, where did all that money go? Much of it likely ended up in the pockets of the junta's corrupt leadership — the same people with blood on their hands. Instead of buying food, medicine, or shelter for disaster victims, funds are more often spent on bullets, bombs, and weapons of war. A portion is funneled into rebuilding the lavish military capital of Naypyidaw rather than helping the ruined towns and cities hit by natural disasters.

Meanwhile, the junta's public gesture — offering **10 million kyats (approx. USD 4,700)** in aid per victim — seems like a token amount when compared to the USD 138 million received. In fact, the collective donations of ordinary citizens could easily surpass that official figure. The truth is clear: the military has never genuinely cared for the welfare of the people. Their interests lie only in maintaining control and enriching themselves — no matter the cost.

## AN EARTHQUAKE BECOMES A POLITICAL OPENING FOR THE JUNTA

Min Aung Hlaing — who has been warranted from the ICC for Rohingya genocides — got international sympathy in the wake of the recent earthquake. Not only did he benefit from the inflow of international aid funds, but he also managed to attend the BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok on April 3–4 and manage to get international recognition. For the military, the earthquake was merely a temporary issue; their real objective was political legitimacy — the exit they had long been seeking.



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To gain this, the junta tried to leverage a fake election as a public facade. And some countries seem to accept this facade. Citing the earthquake as justification, Min Aung Hlaing traveled back and forth to Bangkok. During these trips, some ASEAN leaders met with him and began to suggest peaceful political dialogue as a way to resolve Myanmar's ongoing crisis.

As these diplomatic overtures echo internationally, certain long-dormant "peace opportunists" — domestic figures who claim to seek peace — have also started to emerge within the country. But the question remains: Will this election actually happen?

The military council has declared its intention to hold elections in December 2025 or early 2026. Back in July 2024, citing security concerns, Min Aung Hlaing announced during a parliamentary meeting that the elections might have to be held in parts — only in areas under military control. Out of 330 townships, they believe they can only conduct elections in a little more than half.

Nevertheless, the junta will go ahead with the election at all costs. Under an authoritarian regime, the laws and rules are theirs to write, rewrite, or break as they wish. This will be an election soaked in blood — devoid of fairness, integrity, or legitimacy.

The people of Myanmar no longer have the heart to coexist with a criminal army. And even if the results of this election are imposed, the public will never truly accept or recognize them.

However, the international community may end up recognizing a government formed through this sham election as legitimate. This is why resistance groups, international

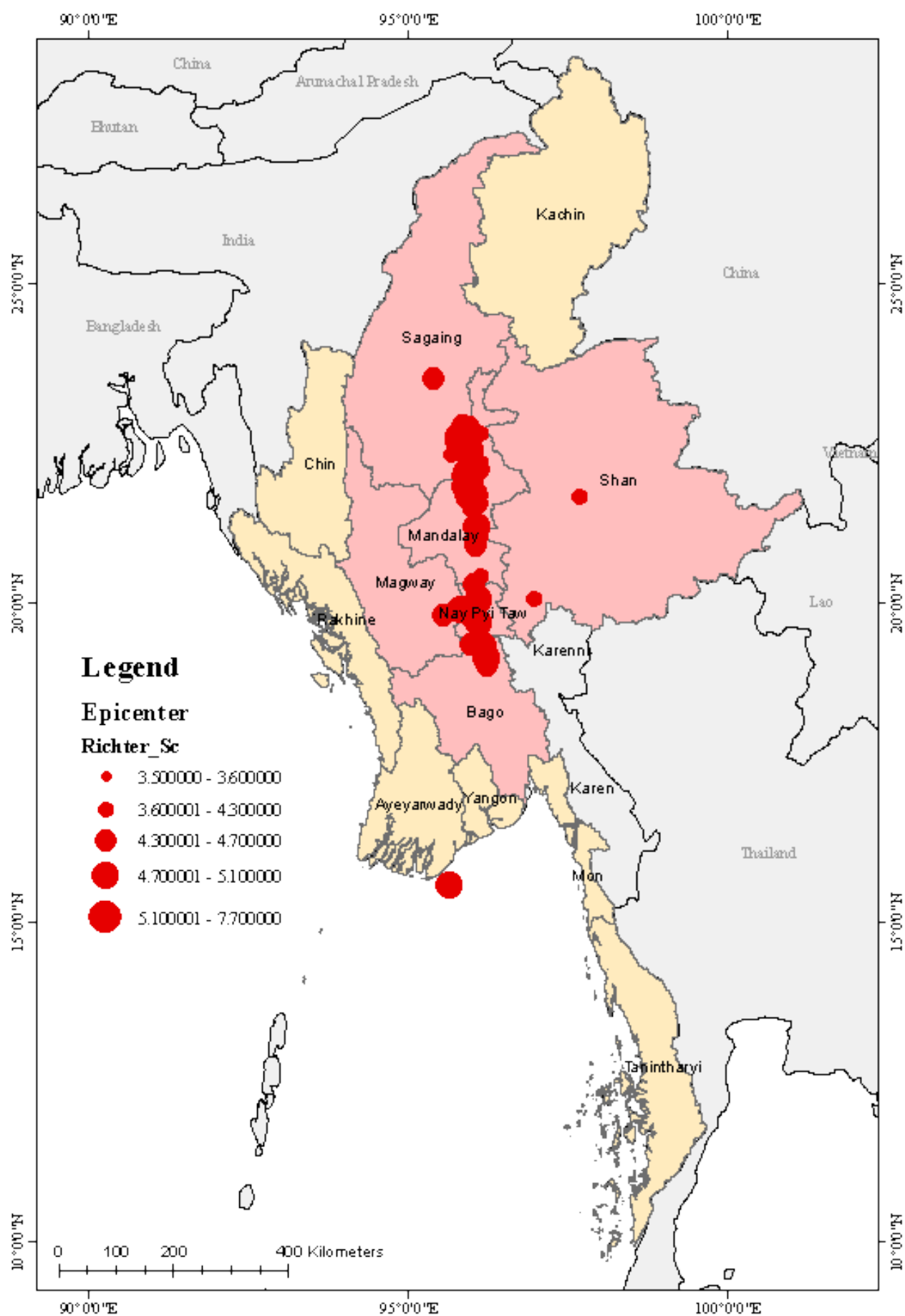
communities and oppressed people all around the world who stand with the people of Burma must speak out globally. They must ensure that this exit route for the military is exposed for what it is — a false one, not one chosen by the people.

The real political solution for Myanmar lies not in a junta-led election, but in revolution. This revolution is not a regime change, it's a change of a whole new system bringing an end to the junta. Only with the fall of the military dictatorship can true peace, development, and democratic elections based on justice ever become a reality in Burma.



**ONLY THE PEOPLE CAN DETERMINE THE  
RIGHTEOUS DECISION OF THE  
REVOLUTION"**

The people of Myanmar have already endured the most difficult and harsh times. On top of the oppression of the military regime and the country's deep crisis, the recent earthquake has brought further sorrow, loss, and suffering. At the same time, however, signs of victory from the spirit of revolution have begun to emerge. In April, the revolutionary forces managed to seize control of cities like Inndaw and Falam. The resistance forces, who started with handmade rifles and single-shot weapons, are now capable of capturing military bases and battalions.



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The oppressed people of Myanmar, under the long and relentless path of revolution, will remove any and all who stand in the way. Real political change in Myanmar can only be brought about by the people themselves. The people of Myanmar have already made their decision. No matter the cost in blood, sweat, or sacrifice, they are determined to overthrow the dictatorship — the root cause of their long-standing suffering and poverty.

The revolution in Myanmar is not isolated; it is part of a broader global struggle against oppression.







## THE MILITARY COUNCIL'S NEW KILLING STRATEGY USING PARAMOTORS AND GYROCOPTERS

Nyein Chan Aung

Since the military group seized power, over the past four years, they have been openly and brutally killing people across the entire country of Burma using various methods. In response to this widespread cruelty by the military group and its subordinates, people from all over the country have taken up arms and continued to resist until today.

Facing resistance, the military, which is forced to fight a war across all of Burma, has lost control of two regional military headquarters due to pressure from revolutionary forces. It is also struggling with fuel shortages and the loss of expensive attack aircraft. Since the coup, the military council has lost up to eight fighter jets and helicopters. As a result, starting from the end of 2024, the military council began using a new tactic by introducing paramotors. They have also started test-flying gyrocopters, which are more technologically advanced than paramotors.

A paramotor is a lightweight aircraft that combines a parachute with an engine. The military has started using paramotors for reconnaissance and bombing purposes due to their low cost. Depending on the type, they can fly distances between 30 and 90 miles and reach speeds of up to 64 miles per hour. Moreover, each paramotor

can carry a pilot plus cargo exceeding 160 pounds, making them useful for bombing operations.

Another advantage is that paramotors do not require expensive aviation fuel. They can run on common two-stroke gasoline engines available on the market, which solves the military's aircraft fuel issues. Furthermore, paramotors do not require dedicated airfields for takeoff and landing. They only need an area the size of a football field, allowing them to bomb or scout within a 50-mile radius. This poses a serious threat to civilians.

Similarly, gyrocopters, which have higher performance than paramotors, are also being tested for use against civilians. Gyrocopters can fly up to 235 miles and stay airborne for up to four hours, double the endurance of paramotors. This means a single gyrocopter can make a round trip from Mandalay to Shwebo within four hours.

Unlike paramotors, which use parachutes that can fail in strong winds, gyrocopters have a rotor blade on top, similar to helicopters. These rotors spin automatically due to air pressure, not engine power, allowing safe gliding even if the engine fails. Gyrocopters can use both two-stroke and more powerful four-stroke engines. They

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also feature sensors and can carry up to 300 kilograms, allowing them to perform nighttime reconnaissance and bombing operations. A sack of rice weighs 50 kilograms, so a gyrocopter can carry the equivalent of six sacks.

Each gyrocopter costs between 100,000 and 200,000 US dollars. In contrast, a paramotor costs only between 5,000 and 10,000 US dollars. Because these are much cheaper than military aircraft and easier to maintain, the military is attempting to replace aircraft with paramotors and gyrocopters. Gyrocopters are widely used by Chinese police and military, so the Myanmar military, benefiting from good ties with China, can likely procure them with ease.

The military mainly flies paramotors at night for bombing and during the day for surveillance. Thanks to GPS systems on paramotors, they are effective even at night. During night flights, only the loud engine noise is noticeable, and nothing else is visible in the sky. Because paramotors can fly as low as 400 feet, they can bomb with greater accuracy than aircraft.

Currently, the military mostly uses paramotors in flat regions such as Sagaing, Magway, and Mandalay. Their usage in ethnic minority areas is limited. This selective deployment appears to be due to two reasons. First, paramotors flying at night are hard to see with the naked eye and typically descend to 400 feet to drop bombs, then rapidly ascend to over 10,000 feet beyond the range of small arms. Second, paramotors are easier to control in flat and calm wind conditions, which are more common in central Burma.

At present, paramotors are heavily used in Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay, Bago, and

Ayeyarwady. They are manufactured at Meiktila's Defense Industries Factory 10, while their parachutes are made at military-owned weaving and garment factories. The Air Force bases in Hmawbi Number 16, Magway, Tada U, and the Northwestern Regional Military Command in Monywa have started using them. Military factories are also training soldiers and battalions in their operation.

Starting from late December, the military replaced expensive attack aircraft with paramotors for bombing due to the lower cost and maintenance. As a result of this new strategy, there has been a rise in civilian casualties.

A local resident from Kani Township described an incident by saying, "It started from the night they flew to the border between Pale and Yinmarbin. There were two paramotors. The first one flew over our village. We could hear it from the moment it started. It took more than an hour for the round trip."



On February 7, in Kani Township of Sagaing Region, the military used two paramotors to bomb the model village of Sulegon. One bomb fell inside a monastery compound, damaging both the monastery and a vehicle. Another bomb landed on a house, killing one man and severely injuring another.

On February 11, a paramotor from the

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Myanmar Air Force base in Monywa dropped bombs on Natlalpo North Village in Kani Township, killing a 49-year-old man and a 57-year-old woman.

On February 18 in the evening, the same military base bombed Chaungma East Village, also in Kani, killing four civilians and one defense force member, and injuring about 20 others.

In Chaung U Township, Monywa District, a combined bombing using a jet fighter and a paramotor on February 25 killed eleven people including two children and injured at least eight others. Bombs were dropped on Chaungma and Nwekhwe villages around 11 a.m. without any clashes occurring. The military focused the attack on Chaungma, destroying three homes and damaging eight others.

On March 5, at around 4 p.m., a paramotor bombing in Salin Township, Magway Region, injured two civilians. Five bombs were dropped east of Pyaungkhin village near Zee Tree Road. One man had to have his leg amputated and another sustained facial injuries.

On March 19, the military used both heavy artillery and paramotors to attack Myoung Township in Sagaing Region, killing four civilians in the evening. Artillery fire initially killed two men from nearby villages. Afterward, bombs dropped by paramotors killed two more people in Myoung and injured a woman. Two homes also caught fire and were destroyed.

Even after a major earthquake centered in Sagaing, the military continued its aerial attacks. Up to the present, both fighter jets and paramotors have been widely used to bomb earthquake survivors.

As the rainy season approaches, the

military is testing gyrocopters instead of paramotors, which struggle in high winds. On March 19, a military surveillance group observed a gyrocopter test flight near Naypyidaw. On April 24, two gyrocopters were seen flying near Magway City.

In some countries, paramotors are also used in warfare. However, such use is limited. In most countries, paramotors are used for sports or recreation. In Burma, since around 2014, paramotors were flown for leisure.

Now, however, it is clear that the military group is using cheap paramotors and gyrocopters in a new war strategy to target civilians. Since their deployment began, most victims have been unarmed civilians, especially those in villages and refugee camps. The military, waging war against its own people, is using this brutal method to create fear and suppress support for resistance forces.







# **RAKHINE PEOPLE ON THE BRINK: STARVATION, WAR, AND A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL**

Aung Sit Paing

Since Military Operation 1027, when fierce clashes resumed between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military junta, civilians in Rakhine State have been caught in a relentless crisis and faced with the horrors of war, starvation, and hardship, right on their doorsteps.

As the AA gains ground with increasing military success in their quest for Rakhine independence, the people on the battlefield are fighting a separate battle day by day, month by month, year by year, simply to stay alive.

For those fortunate enough to survive bombings, artillery fire, bullets, and airstrikes, the threat of starvation now looms larger than ever. It's no exaggeration to say: they must now pray not to starve to death.

Currently, only 2 out of 10 people in Rakhine are able to eat sufficiently and the other 8 are heading toward hunger. According to data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), released about six months ago, by April 2025, Rakhine will only be able to meet 20% of its food needs.

The cause of this impending famine is the total blockade imposed since renewed

clashes erupted in late 2023. The population has been sealed off from both sides, unable to move or transport essential goods. The most devastating element of the siege: restrictions on travel and the transport of food and supplies.

According to Fortify Rights, a human rights organization, the AA also enforces some blockades. Meanwhile, Bangladesh has shut down cross-border trade.

International concern has grown. From March 13–16, UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited refugee camps on the Bangladesh–Rakhine border, where he discussed humanitarian access. Fortify Rights has called on the Bangladeshi government and Myanmar authorities to open humanitarian corridors into Rakhine.

The main perpetrator, however, is the military junta, which has split and isolated Rakhine and cut it off from both within and beyond Myanmar. Of Rakhine's 17 townships, only three (Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Mrauk-U) remain under junta control, while the rest are held by the AA.

Because Sittwe, the capital and major port, is still under junta control, the military is able to effectively block aid and trade routes into Rakhine from other parts of Myanmar.

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A UN official stationed in Rakhine, quoted by Fortify Rights, said:

“Since the clashes began in November 2023, the military has severely restricted movement and access. First, they blocked key supply routes from central Rakhine to the north. Later, they cut off supply lines from central Myanmar to northern Rakhine entirely.”

These restrictions have plunged civilians into food insecurity, while access to medical care and medicines has become so scarce that deaths from treatable illnesses are now occurring.

One such tragic death was Aung Htun’s 2.5-year-old daughter, a Rohingya child in Pauk Taw Township who died from diarrhea within three hours in July 2024 due to lack of medicine and treatment.

“I called a health team, but the military’s restrictions meant they couldn’t send medicine. My daughter was too young, too weak. She died within three hours. My wife and I were devastated,” said Aung Htun.

According to WHO records, between June and October 2024, over 2,600 people in Rakhine contracted Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) due to severe dehydration. Fortify Rights estimates 12 deaths during this period. Most victims could not even access basic oral rehydration salts, which were scarce and prohibitively expensive.



The military junta has neither provided assistance nor allowed UN or civil society organizations access. All humanitarian efforts have been blocked at military checkpoints.

“We had to suspend ground operations. We’ve repeatedly applied for travel authorization (TA) from the junta but were denied every time — though they never issue official rejections. If we don’t hear back, it means we’ve been denied. We even tried contacting local military offices, but they didn’t respond,” one humanitarian worker told Fortify Rights.

Due to these trade restrictions and ongoing warfare, rice cultivation in Rakhine has become difficult, and prices are skyrocketing.

“Even during the Mocha cyclone, prices weren’t this high. Now that fighting’s resumed, prices have jumped tenfold. In the past, farming was manageable, goods could flow, roads were usable. Now, with the region completely sealed off, goods can’t enter. Some merchants hoard and sell at inflated prices. For daily wage earners, life has become impossible,” said a Rakhine local.

Most people in northern Rakhine farm, while in the south, fishing is common. But now, most residents can’t make a stable living from any job. Many are unemployed and struggling to afford even a day’s worth of food.

During the early days of Operation 1027, even a cup of coffee was a luxury. Previously costing 50 kyats, it now sells for 500 kyats, a tenfold increase due to the trade blockade.

While trade with Bangladesh remains closed, some goods are still accessible





through India. Goods are brought in via both river and road routes from Kyauk Taw in Rakhine to Mizoram, India.

“Only the small wealthy class can go trade in India now. The rest of us can’t afford it. Jobs are scarce. Even if we want to start something, the capital needed has skyrocketed. What used to cost 500,000 kyats now needs 1 to 1.5 million. Plus, traveling to India incurs fuel and ferry costs, taxes, and is very dangerous, especially in the rainy season. People risk their lives to make these trips, so when they sell the goods, prices are high,” said a local.

The AA is now pushing, battle by battle, to liberate the entire state from military control. The Rakhine resistance, which began in November 2023, has been going for nearly a year and a half, with numerous victories. But civilians remain trapped in the crossfire, fighting to stay alive and not starve.

The international community now fears Rakhine is becoming a cut-off famine zone. According to the UN, over 519,000 people have been displaced, and more than 2 million are in urgent need of food, medicine, and basic necessities.

Fortify Rights is calling on both the AA and Bangladesh to allow international humanitarian access to Rakhine. They argue that the junta’s actions, particularly its deliberate obstruction of aid, amounts to war crimes.





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