

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE A S E A N N E T W O R K O N B U R M A
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- The situation in Arakan State remains extremely tense with renewed clashes between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya in several townships.
- Regime authorities continue to commit serious human rights abuses against Rohingya in Northern Arakan State, including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial killings, rape, and restrictions on religious freedom.
- The UN estimates that 80,000 people affected by sectarian violence in Arakan State will require ongoing humanitarian assistance for the rest of the year. The regime still detains five aid workers.
- The international community continues to express concern over the treatment of Rohingya in Arakan State and the regime's refusal to recognize their right to citizenship.
- Parliament elects a new Vice-President; President sidelines opponents in a cabinet reshuffle.
- A major Tatmadaw offensive in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, causes some 8,000 civilians to flee their homes. China forcibly returns about 4,900 refugees to Kachin State.
- Ethnic groups express unhappiness over the ceasefire process. In Karen State, fresh conflict and ongoing human rights abuses overshadow peace talks.
- The regime continues to arbitrarily arrest and imprison human rights defenders, including a lawyer who recently returned from exile.
- Numerous challenges for press freedom remain despite the regime's announcement of the end of prior censorship of all publications.

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KEY STORY

Arakan State situation remains tense

In August, the situation in Arakan State remained tense with renewed clashes between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya in several townships.¹

- **4-6 August:** Sectarian violence resulted in the death of at least seven people, the destruction of more than 100 houses and the displacement of 3,000 persons in five predominantly Rohingya villages in Kyauktaw Township.² Unrest also spread to Minbya and Mrauk U Townships.³

¹ OCHA (15 Aug 12) Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 7

² Xinhua (11 Aug 12) Death toll rises to 13 in renewed riot in Myanmar western state: official; Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) Seven killed in Fresh unrest in Rakhine; OCHA (15 Aug 12) Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 7

- **8 August:** Regime authorities imposed a 7pm-5am curfew in Kyauktaw Township.⁴
- **11 August:** Regime authorities shortened the curfew hours from 6pm until 6am to 7pm until 5am in all seven townships affected by the order.⁵
- **13 August:** Some schools reopened in Maungdaw Township but 98 of 159 schools remained closed due to ongoing security concerns.⁶

On 21 August, regime Border Affairs Minister Lt Gen Thein Htay said that 89 people had died while 5,338 houses, 19 mosques, and 14 monasteries had been destroyed since the beginning of the unrest in June.⁷ Thein Htay also said that regime authorities arrested 987 people involved in the riots.⁸

Regime downplays crisis, still detains aid workers despite some releases

On 15 August, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that an estimated 80,000 people affected by sectarian violence in Arakan State would require ongoing humanitarian assistance for the rest of the year.⁹ On 25 August, it was reported that there were an estimated 70,000 IDPs - 50,000 Rohingya and 20,000 Buddhists - in Arakan State.¹⁰ IDPs were still heavily reliant on food aid and the situation in IDP camps remained precarious, with poor sanitation, overcrowding, and an increase in the number of diarrhea cases.¹¹

Despite the magnitude of the situation, on 10 August regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin claimed that conditions in Arakan State did not constitute a humanitarian crisis¹² as the regime continued to detain aid workers. As of 31 August, five aid workers remained in detention - one from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), two from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and two from Action Against Hunger (ACF).¹³ On 15-16 August, the regime released at least six UN and INGO aid workers arrested in June.¹⁴ On 28 August, President Thein Sein pardoned three aid workers who had each been sentenced to jail terms of between two to six years on 24 August by a court in Maungdaw.¹⁵ The regime had denied the three aid workers - employees of the UNHCR, the World Food Program (WFP), and the UNHCR-affiliated Community Social Services Education Project (CSSEP) respectively - access to a lawyer during their detention.¹⁶ On 4 August, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that the charges brought against those detained were unfounded and that they were denied the right to due process.¹⁷

Human rights abuses against Rohingya continue

On 1 August, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released “‘The government could have stopped this’ - Sectarian violence and ensuing abuses in Burma’s Arakan State.”¹⁸ The report documented the regime’s failure to protect both Rakhine and Rohingya communities during the unrest. It also accused the Tatmadaw, Na Sa Ka, and police of committing serious human rights abuses against Rohingya, including killings, mass arrests, and rape.¹⁹ In addition to the HRW’s report, disturbing unconfirmed reports emerged of mass killings of Rohingya by Tatmadaw soldiers in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.²⁰ On 21 August, a regime Foreign Affairs Ministry statement rejected as “false and fabricated

³ Xinhua (11 Aug 12) Death toll rises to 13 in renewed riot in Myanmar western state: official

⁴ Xinhua (09 Aug 12) Myanmar imposes curfew on one more area in western state; Xinhua (11 Aug 12) Death toll rises to 13 in renewed riot in Myanmar western state: official; RFA (06 Aug 12) New Violence in Rakhine

⁵ OCHA (15 Aug 12) Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 7

⁶ Narinjara News (18 Aug 12) Student Attendance Remains Low as Schools Reopen in Maungdaw; EMG (30 Aug 12) Rakhine nationals feel insecure about living in Maungdaw

⁷ NLM (22 Aug 12) Union Minister Lt-Gen Thein Htay meets Rakhine State Conflicts Investigation Commission Members

⁸ NLM (22 Aug 12) Union Minister Lt-Gen Thein Htay meets Rakhine State Conflicts Investigation Commission Members

⁹ OCHA (15 Aug 12) Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 7

¹⁰ AFP (25 Aug 12) Myanmar communal bloodshed leaves deep scars

¹¹ OCHA (15 Aug 12) Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 7

¹² Irrawaddy (17 Aug 12) Burma Rebuffs Asean Bid for Role in Arakan State

¹³ IRIN (30 Aug 12) MYANMAR: Government frees two UN employees

¹⁴ VOA (27 Aug 12) Burma Sentences UN Staff to Prison for Rakhine Violence; AP (22 Aug 12) Officials say Myanmar releases more int'l aid workers who were detained; RFA (16 Aug 12) Rakhine Aid Workers Freed

¹⁵ VOA (28 Aug 12) Burma's President Pardons 2 UN Staffers, Another Aid Worker

¹⁶ RFA (27 Aug 12) UN Workers Denied Attorneys

¹⁷ Irrawaddy (17 Aug 12) UN Cannot Reach 25,000 Kachin Refugees

¹⁸ Reuters (01 Aug 12) Rohingya Muslims "persecuted" after Myanmar crackdown - report

¹⁹ KRW (01 Aug 12) “The government could have stopped this” - Sectarian violence and ensuing abuses in Burma’s Arakan State

²⁰ Al Jazeera (08 Aug 12) 'Mass graves' for Myanmar's Rohingya

news” allegations of human rights abuses committed by regime authorities and said that authorities “never practiced [a] policy of violence against Muslims.”²¹

Despite the regime’s denial, authorities continued to commit serious human rights abuses against Rohingya including arbitrary arrests,²² extrajudicial killings,²³ and rape.²⁴ In addition, the regime imposed restrictions on Rohingya’s religious activities for the celebration of the Muslim holiday Eid-ul-Fitr.²⁵ On 7 August, Home Affairs Minister Lt Gen Ko Ko said that authorities were “tightening” restrictions on Rohingya.²⁶

Regime fact-finding commission lacks credibility

On 13 August, President Thein Sein reiterated the regime’s opposition to any foreign investigation into sectarian violence in Arakan State despite increased pressure from the international community.²⁷ On 17 August, Thein Sein announced the formation of a 27-member commission tasked with investigating the unrest in Arakan State and proposing solutions for the peaceful coexistence of Buddhist and Rohingya communities.²⁸ The commission must present its findings by 16 November.²⁹ Chaired by a retired regime official from the Religious Affairs Ministry, the commission included civil society members, religious leaders, former political prisoners, and representatives from five political parties.³⁰ However, many questioned the commission’s credibility and impartiality.³¹ The commission included representatives from two Rakhine political parties but no members from the Rohingya-backed National Democratic Party for Development. In addition, the commission included several members (such as 88 Generation Student Ko Ko Gyi and Rakhine Nationals Progressive Party Chairman Aye Maung) who openly expressed their anti-Rohingya views during the unrest.³²

The formation of a fact-finding commission came a day after the regime Human Rights Commission (HRC) Chairman Win Mra said there was no need for a probe by the HRC into unrest in Arakan State.³³

International concern over Arakan State unrest

The international community continued to express concern over the treatment of Rohingya in Arakan State and the regime’s failure to recognize their right to citizenship.

- **4 August:** The Egyptian Foreign Ministry released a statement in which it condemned the violence against Muslims in Arakan State.³⁴

²¹ Xinhua (22 Aug 12) Myanmar gov’t refutes accusations of religious persecution, discrimination in Rakhine incident; NLM (22 Aug 12) The incidents in the Rakhine State are sectarian conflicts which are purely internal affairs of a sovereign state - They are not relating to any kind of religious persecution or religious discrimination

²² Kaladan News (02 Aug 12) Harassments increased day by day in Arakan State; Kaladan News (05 Aug 12) Police still harass Rohingya in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (07 Aug 12) Latest information of Arakan State on August 7, 2012; Kaladan News (09 Aug 12) Authority extend curfew in Arakan State; Kaladan News (11 Aug 12) Police personnel gear up harassment of Rohingyas in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (12 Aug 12) Up to dated news of Maungdaw Township on August 12, 2012; Kaladan News (24 Aug 12) Ground situation of northern Arakan State; Kaladan News (29 Aug 12) Update news of Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships; Kaladan News (31 Aug 12) Nasaka arrest four youths

²³ Kaladan News (07 Aug 12) Latest information of Arakan State on August 7, 2012; Kaladan News (16 Aug 12) Army kills one, more injure in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (17 Aug 12) More Rohingya kill in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (17 Aug 12) 5 killed, 17 wounded and arrested more in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (31 Aug 12) Nasaka shot dead two Rohingya youths

²⁴ Kaladan News (17 Aug 12) More Rohingya kill in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (24 Aug 12) Ground situation of northern Arakan State

²⁵ Kaladan News (19 Aug 12) No Eid prayer in Maungdaw; Kaladan News (20 Aug 12) No Rohingya on the road in Maungdaw during Eid day; Kaladan News (23 Aug 12) Religious persecution intensified alongside ethnic-cleansing in Arakan; Kaladan News (24 Aug 12) Ground situation of northern Arakan State

²⁶ Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) Human rights body cool on truth commission proposal

²⁷ VOA (14 Aug 12) Burma’s President Tells VOA He Will Open Schools for Rohingya

²⁸ AP (17 Aug 12) Myanmar sets up internal probe of sectarian unrest; Xinhua (17 Aug 12) Myanmar gov’t forms investigation commission to probe into Rakhine incident; NLM (18 Aug 12) Investigation Commission formed

²⁹ NLM (18 Aug 12) Investigation Commission formed

³⁰ NLM (18 Aug 12) Investigation Commission formed

³¹ RFA (23 Aug 12) Commission to Visit Conflict Zone, Mizzima News (21 Aug 12) Rohingya coalition says some gov’t commission members biased

³² RFA (23 Aug 12) Commission to Visit Conflict Zone, Mizzima News (21 Aug 12) Rohingya coalition says some gov’t commission members biased; DVB (17 Aug 12) Gov’t forms commission to investigate Arakan violence

³³ VOA (16 Aug 12) Burma Rights Commission Resists Investigating Rohingya Abuses

³⁴ AFP (04 Aug 12) Egypt denounces anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar

- **5 August:** Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Sec Gen Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu expressed disappointment at the collective failure of the international community to stop the “ethnic cleansing” of Rohingya in Arakan State.³⁵
- **6 August:** The French Foreign Ministry called on Burma’s regime to protect all civilians in Arakan State without discrimination and to clarify the right to citizenship for Rohingya and afford them “full respect for human rights.”³⁶
- **6 August:** Saudi Arabia condemned the “ethnic cleansing” of Rohingya in Arakan State.³⁷
- **8 August:** South Africa urged all parties to halt the violence in Arakan State and called on Burma’s regime to pursue reconciliation efforts.³⁸
- **8 August:** The US State Department urged all parties to refrain from further violence and “uphold principles of nondiscrimination, tolerance, and religious freedom.”³⁹
- **9 August:** Morocco’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement expressing deep concern for Rohingya in Arakan State and urged the regime to provide them with the “necessary protection” to prevent further casualties.⁴⁰
- **13 August:** UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said that the UK remained seriously concerned about the violence in Arakan State and urged the regime to take “effective and lawful steps” to prevent further violence.⁴¹
- **16 August:** The OIC condemned the regime’s continued recourse to violence against Rohingya and its refusal to recognize their right to citizenship.⁴²

Under pressure from the international community, on 10 August the regime permitted a Turkish delegation led by FM Ahmet Davutoğlu to visit affected communities in Akyab, Arakan State, and help distribute aid.⁴³ Davutoğlu called on the regime to allow greater access for international humanitarian assistance.⁴⁴

Bangladesh blocks aid efforts, continues to turn away Rohingya

On 2 August, Bangladesh ordered three INGOs - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Action Against Hunger (ACF), and Muslim Aid UK - to stop providing humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees in the Cox’s Bazaar area.⁴⁵ Bangladeshi officials said that the provision of aid was encouraging Rohingya to illegally enter Bangladesh.⁴⁶ On 4 August, MSF warned that the cessation of aid would have repercussions for thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and could be “life threatening.”⁴⁷ Throughout the month, Bangladeshi authorities continued to turn away scores of Rohingya who attempted to flee from violence and persecution in Burma’s Arakan State.⁴⁸

INSIDE BURMA

New Vice-President elected, cabinet reshuffled

In August, President Thein Sein sidelined opponents in a cabinet reshuffle that left 10 ministry posts vacant. In addition, a new Vice-President filled the position left vacant by Tin Aung Myint Oo in early May.

³⁵ AFP (05 Aug 12) OIC calls for fact-finding mission to Myanmar

³⁶ AFP (06 Aug 12) France calls on Myanmar to protect Muslims

³⁷ AFP (07 Aug 12) Saudi accuses Myanmar of 'ethnic cleansing' of Muslims

³⁸ SAPA (08 Aug 12) SA govt calls for end to Myanmar sectarian violence

³⁹ Irrawaddy (09 Aug 12) US Denies 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Burma

⁴⁰ KUNA (10 Aug 12) Morocco "deeply" concerned over killings of Muslims in Myanmar

⁴¹ KUNA (13 Aug 12) Need to end violence in Burma - UK foreign minister

⁴² AFP (16 Aug 12) Islamic summit will take Myanmar's Rohingyas issue to UN

⁴³ NLM (12 Aug 12) Turkish FM and delegation on tour of Rakhine State

⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (10 Aug 12) Turkey Foreign Minister Tours Arakan State

⁴⁵ Reuters (02 Aug 12) Bangladesh tells international charities to stop aiding Rohingyas

⁴⁶ BBC (02 Aug 12) Bangladesh orders charities to stop aid to Rohingyas; AFP (02 Aug 12) Bangladesh bans foreign charities helping Rohingya

⁴⁷ AFP (05 Aug 12) Aid group urges Dhaka to reconsider Rohingya ban

⁴⁸ Daily Star (10 Aug 12) 15 Rohingyas sent back to Myanmar; Reuters (02 Aug 12) Bangladesh tells international charities to stop aiding Rohingyas; Kaladan News (26 Aug 12) Bangladesh pushes back 65 Rohingyas; Daily Star (26 Aug 12) 26 more Rohingyas sent back; Kaladan News (29 Aug 12) Nearly 59 Rohingyas held in Bangladesh border

- **15 August:** Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nyan Tun, 58, was sworn in as one of the country's two vice-presidents shortly after the National Parliament approved his nomination.⁴⁹ [For a profile of Nyan Tun, please visit <http://bit.ly/MYYpat>]
- **27 August:** President Thein Sein reassigned nine ministers [See Table] and appointed 15 new deputy ministers, including four women.⁵⁰ As a result, four key ministers were attached to the President's Office and Aung Kyi replaced Kyaw Hsan as Information Minister.⁵¹
- **28 August:** Regime Construction Minister Khin Maung Myint, Electric Power-1 Minister Zaw Min, and Auditor General Lun Maung were "permitted to retire." Information Deputy Minister Soe Win was shifted to the Religious Affairs Ministry as deputy minister.⁵²
- **29 August:** President Thein Sein appointed two new Foreign Affairs deputy ministers and a new Finance and Revenue deputy minister.⁵³
- **31 August:** President Thein Sein appointed a new Information Deputy Minister.⁵⁴

Name	From Ministry of	To Ministry of
Soe Thein	Industry	President's Office
Aung Min	Rail Transportation	President's Office
Hla Tun	Finance & Revenue	President's Office
Tin Naing Thein	National Planning & Economic Development	President's Office
Aung Kyi	Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement	Information
Kyaw Hsan	Information	Cooperatives
Ohn Myint	Cooperatives/Livestock & Fisheries	Livestock & Fisheries
Aye Myint	Science & Technology	Industry
Tint Hsan	Hotels & Tourism/Sports	Sports

Civilians flee as conflict intensifies in Kachin State

In August, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) continued in Kachin State as the regime and the KIA failed to hold talks for the second straight month. From mid-August, the Tatmadaw amassed troops in Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)-controlled areas of Hpakant Township, Kachin State, and began an offensive which caused up to 8,000 civilians to flee their homes.⁵⁵

- **8 August:** A KIA bomb attack in Gang Dau Yang Village, Waingmaw Township, Kachin State, killed around 20 Tatmadaw troops.⁵⁶
- **11 August:** KIA forces killed eight Tatmadaw soldiers in a clash at Saga Pa, Waingmaw Township, Kachin State. Five KIA soldiers were also killed in the fighting.⁵⁷
- **18-19 August:** Tatmadaw troops moved into Hpakant Township, Kachin State, in preparation for an offensive against the KIA.⁵⁸
- **27 August:** KIA forces killed 17 Tatmadaw troops from IB 272 in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.⁵⁹
- **29 August:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces at Maw Mau Bum and Myauk Hpyu in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.⁶⁰

Tatmadaw soldiers also continued to commit human rights abuses against civilians in Kachin and Northern Shan States.

⁴⁹ AP (15 Aug 12) Myanmar parliament names politically moderate naval chief as new vice president; Reuters (15 Aug 12) Myanmar navy chief takes vice-presidential post

⁵⁰ AP (27 Aug 12) Myanmar president announces Cabinet reshuffle; NLM (28 Aug 12) Union Ministers reshuffled; NLM (28 Aug 12) Deputy Ministers appointed; Xinhua (27 Aug 12) Myanmar announces cabinet reshuffle

⁵¹ AFP (27 Aug 12) Myanmar president shakes up reformist government; Reuters (28 Aug 12) Myanmar president promotes reformers in cabinet shake-up; NYT (27 Aug 12) President of Myanmar Reshuffles His Cabinet

⁵² NLM (29 Aug 12) Permission granted to resign from the post of Union Ministers; NLM (29 Aug 12) Deputy Minister reshuffled; NLM (29 Aug 12) Permission granted to resign from the post of Union Auditor-General

⁵³ Xinhua (29 Aug 12) Myanmar appoints three new deputy ministers; NLM (30 Aug 12) Deputy Ministers appointed

⁵⁴ NLM (01 Sep 12) Deputy Minister appointed

⁵⁵ Irrawaddy (30 Aug 12) More Displaced as Kachin Fighting Escalates

⁵⁶ Kachin News Group (13 Aug 12) 28 Burma Army troops killed during Kachin fighting last week

⁵⁷ Kachin News Group (13 Aug 12) 28 Burma Army troops killed during Kachin fighting last week

⁵⁸ Kachin News Group (20 Aug 12) 500 civilians flee Kachin state's Hpakant area as Burma army moves in

⁵⁹ Irrawaddy (28 Aug 12) Thousands Flee as Burma Army Attacks Jade Capital

⁶⁰ Kachin News Group (29 Aug 12) Burmese Army and KIA clash at Myauk Hpyu in Hpakant

- **2 August:** Tatmadaw soldiers from LIBs 16 and 143 detained and severely beat a 48-year-old woman near Mongkoe, Muse Township, Northern Shan State, because they suspected that her husband had ties to the KIA.⁶¹
- **11 August:** Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 15 gang-raped a 14-year-old girl in Tung Pin Village, Mohnyin Township, Kachin State.⁶²

On 14 August, the regime Human Rights Commission (HRC) issued a statement regarding its 23-27 July fact-finding mission to Myitkyina and Waingmaw Townships, Kachin State. The HRC statement highlighted alleged human rights violations committed by the KIA but glossed over the well-documented abuses committed by Tatmadaw troops.⁶³

KNU and regime hold talks amid fresh conflict

Despite talks between the regime and the Karen National Union (KNU) in early August, tensions on the ground remained high, with fighting between the Tatmadaw-backed Border Guard Force (BGF) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) reported on the same day as the talks took place.

- **5 August:** A regime delegation led by Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min met with KNU representatives in Myawaddy, Karen State.⁶⁴ Both sides agreed to meet again on 27 August in Hpa-an, Karen State, to discuss details of a ceasefire code of conduct and regulations for armed personnel on both sides.⁶⁵
- **5 August:** KNLA forces killed four regime BGF soldiers in a clash in Mae Seik Village, Papun Township, Karen State.⁶⁶ Two KNLA soldiers were reportedly killed in the clash.⁶⁷
- **25 August:** The KNU announced that the regime had unilaterally postponed the third round of talks scheduled to begin on 27 August.⁶⁸ KNU spokesperson Naw May-Oo Mutraw said that the regime offered no explanation for the postponement other than that they were too busy to attend.⁶⁹ Eventually, the regime and the KNU agreed on holding talks on 3-4 September in Hpa-an.⁷⁰

On 28 August, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) released a report titled “Bitter Wounds and Lost Dreams: Human Rights Under Assault in Karen State, Burma.”⁷¹ The report showed that human rights violations by the Tatmadaw continued despite an initial ceasefire agreement between the regime and the KNU.⁷² The report’s key findings included:⁷³

- Nearly one third of the 665 families surveyed reported experiencing human rights violations, including forced labor, torture, and rape, between January 2011 and January 2012.
- Human rights violations had a much higher incidence in territory controlled by the Tatmadaw than in areas where ethnic armed groups operated.
- People who lived near a mine, pipeline, hydroelectric dam, or other regime-backed projects were significantly more likely to have experienced human rights violations such as forced labor, blocked access to their land, and restrictions on their movement.

⁶¹ Kachin News Group (08 Aug 12) Burma army troops assault Kachin woman in northern Shan state

⁶² Kachin News Group (16 Aug 12) Shan girl gang raped by Burmese government soldiers

⁶³ NLM (14 Aug 12) Statement of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission on its trip to the Kachin State (5/2012)

⁶⁴ Karen News (05 Aug 12) KNU and Government to hammer out ceasefire ‘code of conduct’ detail

⁶⁵ Karen News (05 Aug 12) KNU and Government to hammer out ceasefire ‘code of conduct’ detail; DVB (07 Aug 12) Karen National Union, peace committee hold preliminary talks

⁶⁶ KIC (07 Aug 12) KNLA and government’s militia fight – four soldiers killed

⁶⁷ KIC (07 Aug 12) KNLA and government’s militia fight – four soldiers killed

⁶⁸ KNU (25 Aug 12) Statement on the Burmese Government’s Postponement of the Third Round of Negotiations with the Karen National Union

⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (27 Aug 12) KNU Anger as Govt Postpones Peace Talks

⁷⁰ Karen News (29 Aug 12) KNU wants relocation of Burma Army high on peace-talk agenda

⁷¹ IRIN (28 Aug 12) In Brief: New report highlights abuses in eastern Myanmar

⁷² PHR (28 Aug 12) Human Rights Violations Continue in Burma’s Karen State Despite Announcements of Political Reforms

⁷³ PHR (28 Aug 12) Bitter Wounds and Lost Dreams: Human Rights Under Assault in Karen State, Burma

Ethnic groups unhappy about ceasefire talks

Despite the succession of ceasefire agreements concluded under Thein Sein, in August representatives from various ethnic armed groups and political parties expressed serious reservations about the ongoing ceasefire process and questioned the sincerity of the regime's peace overtures.

- **9 August:** Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) Vice-President Abel Tweed said that “none of the conditions” agreed during negotiations with the regime had been met and that the Tatmadaw continued to expand its presence in Karenni State.⁷⁴
- **12 August:** Karen National Union (KNU) Chairman Tamla Baw said that the regime was pursuing negotiations with an emphasis on “business matters” rather than genuine political dialogue.⁷⁵
- **13 August:** It was reported that New Mon State Party (NMSP) Secretary Hong Sar said that the regime lacked sincerity in ongoing negotiations and had failed to address political issues.⁷⁶
- **15 August:** Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) leader Hkun Htun Oo said that peace talks should not merely focus on land or “business concessions” for ethnic groups but on resolving political issues such as a more decentralized form of governance.⁷⁷
- **17 August:** It was reported that Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) spokesperson La Nan said that the regime was pursuing a “systematic strategy” of holding peace talks with ethnic armed groups while simultaneously waging military offensives.⁷⁸
- **17 August:** It was reported that Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) leader Yawd Serk said that many of the terms of the agreements reached between the SSA-S and the regime had not been implemented and that although the regime had “declared peace,” the Tatmadaw was pursuing “a different path.”⁷⁹

In August, the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) became the 13th ethnic armed group to sign a ceasefire agreement with the regime since President Thein Sein took office. On 25 August, PNLO officials and a regime delegation led by Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min signed an eight-point agreement in Taunggyi, Shan State.⁸⁰ The PNLO also signed a five-point agreement with a state-level regime delegation led by Shan State Border Affairs Minister Col Aung Thu.⁸¹

Parliamentary session highlights

In August, the 4th parliamentary session continued in Naypyidaw. Important developments included:

- **1 August:** The People's Assembly rejected, by a vote of 288 to 43 with 17 abstentions, a proposal introduced by New National Democracy Party (NNDP) MP Thein Nyunt to form a commission to investigate the root causes of the numerous strikes in factories in Rangoon Division over the previous months.⁸² Regime Labor Minister Aung Kyi, who had earlier called for the withdrawal of the proposal, said that such a commission would be “very dangerous” and could hurt the confidence of foreign investors.⁸³
- **7 August:** The People's Assembly formed the 15-member ‘Rule of Law and Peace and Stability Committee’ and appointed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as its chairperson.⁸⁴ The committee's key responsibilities included analyzing existing legislation and making recommendations regarding laws

⁷⁴ DVB (17 Aug 12) Armed Karenni group ready to hold more talks with gov't

⁷⁵ Karen News (12 Aug 12) Karen National Union marks 62nd Martyrs' Day; Irrawaddy (09 Aug 12) KNU Doubts Govt Peace Efforts

⁷⁶ Kaowao News (13 Aug 12) Ethnic Conference Through to Find out Peace Hopefully

⁷⁷ SHAN (16 Aug 12) Elected Shan leader calls for more power to the states

⁷⁸ SHAN (17 Aug 12) Exchange of hearts, not brains, will bring peace

⁷⁹ SHAN (17 Aug 12) Exchange of hearts, not brains, will bring peace

⁸⁰ NLM (27 Aug 12) State Level Peace-Making Group, Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) hold peace talks; Xinhua (27 Aug 12) Myanmar gov't, Pa-O ethnic armed group hold central level peace talks

⁸¹ SHAN (25 Aug 12) Newsflash; NLM (27 Aug 12) State Level Peace-Making Group, Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) hold peace talks

⁸² NLM (02 Aug 12) No country forms commission prior to enforcement of a relevant legislation: Union Minister - Pyithu Hluttaw regular session continues for 19th day; Irrawaddy (02 Aug 12) Worker Strike Probe Shot Down by MPs

⁸³ Xinhua (02 Aug 12) Myanmar's Lower House rejects proposal to probe into strikes

⁸⁴ AP (07 Aug 12) Myanmar's Suu Kyi to chair parliamentary committee; DPA (07 Aug 12) Aung San Suu Kyi appointed head of rule of law committee; Irrawaddy (07 Aug 12) Suu Kyi to Head 'Rule of Law' Committee

that needed to be revoked or amended.⁸⁵ The committee would also be required to assess appeals and complaints about state agencies and submit them to Parliament.⁸⁶

- **8 August:** The People's Assembly rejected, by a vote of 271 to 68 with 15 abstentions, a proposal introduced by NLD MP Win Myint requiring ministers in the national cabinet and in the Division and State administrations to publicly disclose their assets.⁸⁷
- **14 August:** The People's Assembly approved the Foreign Investment Bill after making 94 amendments.⁸⁸ Amendments were primarily aimed at addressing concerns that the initial draft favored foreign investors over local businesses. As a result, MPs introduced several provisions that limited incentives for foreign businesses and imposed restrictions on foreign investment.⁸⁹ The bill would now have to be approved by the National Assembly.⁹⁰
- **16 August:** People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann instructed two parliamentary committees to "urgently" draft amendments to existing legislation on NGO registration.⁹¹ Shwe Mann's decision came after two days of debate over a proposal introduced by NNDP MP Thein Nyunt to draft a new NGO registration law.⁹² During the debate, regime Home Affairs Deputy Minister Brig Gen Kyaw Zan Myint insisted there was no need to draft a new law because the 1988 Registration Law was already adequate.⁹³

Severe floods hit Burma

In August, flooding in 10 of Burma's 14 States and Divisions forced some 85,000 people to flee their homes.⁹⁴ Irrawaddy Division, Karen, Mon, and Northern Shan States were among the worst affected areas.⁹⁵ In Irrawaddy Division, 24 of 26 townships were hit by the floods and around 250,000 hectares of rice fields were inundated.⁹⁶ USDP Irrawaddy Division Parliament Speaker Hsan Hsint admitted that poor infrastructure and the regime's failure to enact adequate flood prevention measures exacerbated the flooding.⁹⁷ As a result of the floods, it was estimated that rice production could decline by 25% nationwide.⁹⁸

Against this backdrop, on 15 August risk analysis firm Maplecroft released its 2012 Natural Hazards Risk Atlas.⁹⁹ The report rated Burma as among ten countries possessing an economy most at risk of serious disruption due to environmental crises.¹⁰⁰ The report also said that Burma demonstrated a "poor capability" to recover from a "significant event," which would further expose its economy.¹⁰¹

⁸⁵ Xinhua (07 Aug 12) Aung San Suu Kyi to head parliament's committee for rule of law, peace, stability; Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) NLD leader pledges to 'safeguard rights of society' in committee role

⁸⁶ Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) NLD leader pledges to 'safeguard rights of society' in committee role

⁸⁷ EMG (12 Aug 12) Parliament rejects proposal to declare cabinet members' assets; Irrawaddy (10 Aug 12) MPs Assets Declaration Motion Shot Down; Myanmar Times (20 Aug 12) MPs reject proposal on cabinet asset declaration

⁸⁸ NLM (15 Aug 12) Speaker requests patience of parliamentarian; row over Union level organization definition to be sent to President; EMG (16 Aug 12) Lower House approves new foreign investment bill

⁸⁹ FT (28 Aug 12) Myanmar: planned foreign investment law delayed by local business opposition; Reuters (29 Aug 12) Rift in Myanmar over draft investment law

⁹⁰ EMG (16 Aug 12) Lower House approves new foreign investment bill; Myanmar Times (20 Aug 12) MPs pass law on foreign investment; FT (28 Aug 12) Myanmar: planned foreign investment law delayed by local business opposition

⁹¹ Myanmar Times (27 Aug 12) Hluttaw agrees to amend NGO law

⁹² Irrawaddy (17 Aug 12) NGO Registration Law to be Drafted

⁹³ Myanmar Times (27 Aug 12) Hluttaw agrees to amend NGO law; Irrawaddy (17 Aug 12) NGO Registration Law to be Drafted

⁹⁴ EMG (19 Aug 12) Floods ravage farmlands in Myanmar; AP (24 Aug 12) Flooding in Myanmar forces 85,000 people to flee; BBC (25 Aug 12) Burma floods leave 85,000 homeless in Irrawaddy Delta; Karen News (16 Aug 12) Heavy flooding destroys 9,500 acres of rice in eastern Burma; EMG (19 Aug 12) Floods ravage farmlands in Myanmar; EMG (13 Aug 12) Floods hit lower Myanmar

⁹⁵ BBC (25 Aug 12) Burma floods leave 85,000 homeless in Irrawaddy Delta; Irrawaddy (23 Aug 12) Fierce Flooding Disrupts Delta Life; Myanmar Times (06 Aug 12) Thanlwin flooding displaces thousands; Xinhua (20 Aug 12) Mountain water floods state in NE Myanmar after heavy rainfall; AlertNet (23 Aug 12) Widespread flooding in Myanmar affects thousands; KIC (08 Aug 12) Floods leave 6,000 homeless in Hpa-an Town

⁹⁶ BBC (25 Aug 12) Burma floods leave 85,000 homeless in Irrawaddy Delta; Irrawaddy (23 Aug 12) Fierce Flooding Disrupts Delta Life

⁹⁷ DVB (20 Aug 12) Irrawaddy region's infrastructure exacerbates flooding

⁹⁸ Xinhua (25 Aug 12) Flood-hit farmers in Myanmar urged to run other business

⁹⁹ AFP (15 Aug 12) Asian economies most at risk from natural disasters

¹⁰⁰ AFP (15 Aug 12) Asian economies most at risk from natural disasters; Irrawaddy (21 Aug 12) Environmental Crises Threaten Burma's Economy

¹⁰¹ AFP (15 Aug 12) Asian economies most at risk from natural disasters

Ojea Quintana: Serious human rights challenges remain

On 4 August, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana concluded his seven-day visit to the country, which had begun in July [See *July 2012 Burma Bulletin*].¹⁰² During the last three days of his visit, Ojea Quintana met with various regime officials, representatives from civil society, and MPs - including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁰³ On 1 August, Ojea Quintana concluded a two-day fact-finding mission to areas hit by sectarian violence in Arakan State.¹⁰⁴ However, the regime denied him access to Kachin State.¹⁰⁵ On 4 August, before leaving Burma, Ojea Quintana released a statement that said that Burma continued to “grapple with serious human rights challenges.”¹⁰⁶ Key concerns included:¹⁰⁷

- Allegations of serious human rights violations committed by regime authorities during the unrest in Arakan State, including excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest and detention, killings, denial of due process, and the use of torture during detention.
- Allegations of serious human rights violations committed by the Tatmadaw in Kachin State, including attacks against civilian populations, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and torture.
- The legislative drafting process lacked sufficient inclusiveness and transparency and the implementation of laws remained inadequate.
- The regime Human Rights Commission still had “a long way to go” to be independent and fully compliant with the UN Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions.

With regard to the unrest in Arakan State, Ojea Quintana called for an “independent and credible” investigation into allegations of human rights violations.¹⁰⁸ He also called on the regime to address systematic discrimination against Rohingya, including a review of the 1982 Citizenship Law to ensure its compliance with international human rights standards.¹⁰⁹ Ojea Quintana also recommended Parliament form a truth commission responsible to address grievances from decades of human rights violations and to promote national reconciliation.¹¹⁰

Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment

In August, Burma’s regime continued to arbitrarily arrest and imprison human rights defenders.

- **7 August:** Police in Mandalay detained labor activist Aye Thein for attempting to negotiate with local authorities on behalf of about 100 vendors who were protesting their relocation to another market.¹¹¹
- **29 August:** Rangoon Northern District Court sentenced Kyaw Kyaw Min, a lawyer who recently returned to Burma from exile, to six months in prison.¹¹² Kyaw Kyaw Min’s jail sentence stemmed from an October 2008 conviction on contempt of court charges shortly before he fled to Thailand.¹¹³

As of 24 August, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said there were still at least 450 political prisoners in jails across Burma.¹¹⁴ On 4 August, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana reiterated his call for the immediate and unconditional release of all

¹⁰² NLM (05 Aug 12) Mr Quintana concludes visit

¹⁰³ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar; NLM (02 Aug 12) UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar calls on MNHRC; NLM (04 Aug 12) Publication of bills under debate at Hluttaws prior to enactment contributes to listening of public opinion: UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar

¹⁰⁴ NLM (03 Aug 12) UN Special Rapporteur visits five detainees in Buthidaung Prison

¹⁰⁵ Karen News (10 Aug 12) Burma Army’s ‘shoot on sight’ order still in use

¹⁰⁶ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹⁰⁷ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹⁰⁸ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹⁰⁹ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹¹⁰ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹¹¹ DVB (08 Aug 12) Labour activist arrested in Mandalay after protest

¹¹² Irrawaddy (30 Aug 12) Homecoming NLD Lawyer Jailed for Six Months; AAPP (30 Aug 12) Burma: Overturn 6 month sentence of human rights defender and lawyer Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min

¹¹³ Irrawaddy (30 Aug 12) Homecoming NLD Lawyer Jailed for Six Months; AAPP (30 Aug 12) Burma: Overturn 6 month sentence of human rights defender and lawyer Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min

¹¹⁴ AAPP (24 Aug 12) List of 450 confirmed Political Prisoners whose whereabouts are verified

remaining political prisoners.¹¹⁵ On the same day, President Thein Sein pardoned Phyo Wai Aung, a 33-year-old man who had been sentenced to death, following an unfair trial, over a deadly bomb blast in Rangoon in April 2010.¹¹⁶ Phyo Wai Aung was released from Rangoon's Insein hospital where he was being treated for terminal liver cancer.¹¹⁷

Prior censorship ends, restrictions continue

On 20 August, the regime Information Ministry announced the end of prior censorship of all publications with immediate effect.¹¹⁸ Despite the hype generated by the announcement, numerous challenges for press freedom remained:

- The regime issued a new set of 16 guidelines that barred media from publishing news that harmed national security, the dignity of the state or relations with other countries.¹¹⁹ The guidelines also banned reporting on corruption, forced labor, and child soldiers without using “reliable sources.”¹²⁰
- The Censorship Board remained in place and retained the power to monitor and sanction journals as editors still had to submit their stories to the Board after publication.¹²¹
- Journalists still faced criminal charges under the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act and the 2004 Electronic Transactions Law.¹²²
- Privately-run daily newspapers remained prohibited, leaving a monopoly to state-run dailies filled with regime propaganda.¹²³

Amid the regime's ongoing restrictions, journalists stepped up activities aimed at promoting wider press freedom.

- **2 August:** Ninety-two journalists gathered in Rangoon to form the Committee for Press Freedom (CPF).¹²⁴ The CPF issued a seven-point statement that urged the regime to immediately lift the 31 July suspension of the publication of the journals *Envoy* and *Voice Weekly*; repeal oppressive media laws; guarantee freedom of expression; and consult with media representatives on the drafting of Burma's new media law.¹²⁵
- **4 August:** About 60 journalists rallied in Rangoon and collected signatures in support of the CPF seven-point statement.¹²⁶ In response, the regime Censorship Board barred journals from publishing reports on the demonstration.¹²⁷
- **5 August:** Dozens of journalists rallied in Mandalay and collected signatures in support of the CPF statement.¹²⁸
- **6 August:** Several news journals blacked out their front pages to protest the regime's ongoing media restrictions.¹²⁹

¹¹⁵ OHCHR (04 Aug 12) Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar

¹¹⁶ AP (03 Aug 12) Myanmar frees death-row prisoner with liver cancer; Reuters (03 Aug 12) Myanmar frees ill festival bomber on death row; RFA (04 Aug 12) Myanmar death row bombing convict pardoned

¹¹⁷ RFA (04 Aug 12) Myanmar death row bombing convict pardoned; Irrawaddy (03 Aug 12) Accused Thingyan Bomber Pardoned; Myanmar Times (06 Aug 12) President pardons man convicted of Thingyan bombing

¹¹⁸ AFP (20 Aug 12) Myanmar ends media censorship; AP (20 Aug 12) Myanmar government ends censorship of local media; BBC (20 Aug 12) Burma abolishes media censorship

¹¹⁹ Xinhua (20 Aug 12) Myanmar totally liberalizes domestic media publication control; DVB (20 Aug 12) Burma abolishes pre-censorship, but forbids criticism of state; RFA (20 Aug 12) Burma Ends Censorship; Irrawaddy (20 Aug 12) Journalists Call for More Freedom as Censorship Lifted; Myanmar Times (27 Aug 12) Censorship ends but free press uncertain

¹²⁰ Myanmar Times (27 Aug 12) Censorship ends but free press uncertain

¹²¹ AP (20 Aug 12) Myanmar government ends direct media censorship; DVB (20 Aug 12) Burma abolishes pre-censorship, but forbids criticism of state; CPJ (20 Aug 12) Burma ends pre-publication censorship; harsh laws remain

¹²² NYT (20 Aug 12) Myanmar to Curb Censorship of Media; Irrawaddy (20 Aug 12) Journalists Call for More Freedom as Censorship Lifted; VOA (20 Aug 12) Burma Eases Censorship Rules

¹²³ AP (20 Aug 12) Myanmar government ends direct media censorship; WSJ (20 Aug 12) Myanmar Ends Local Press Censorship; Reuters (20 Aug 12) Myanmar government abolishes press censorship

¹²⁴ DVB (02 Aug 12) Media committee calls for better protection of press; Irrawaddy (03 Aug 12) Media Backlash to Censorship Begins

¹²⁵ RSF (03 Aug 12) Censorship board back in action, suspends two weeklies; DVB (02 Aug 12) Media committee calls for better protection of press; Irrawaddy (03 Aug 12) Media Backlash to Censorship Begins

¹²⁶ AP (04 Aug 12) Myanmar journalists demand end to censorship; AFP (04 Aug 12) Myanmar journalists protest against censorship

¹²⁷ AP (04 Aug 12) Myanmar journalists demand end to censorship; Reuters (06 Aug 12) Myanmar lifts suspensions on journals after protests

¹²⁸ Reuters (06 Aug 12) Myanmar lifts suspensions on journals after protests; Irrawaddy (06 Aug 12) Journals Black Out Covers to Protest Press Restrictions

¹²⁹ RFA (06 Aug 12) Ban on Journals Lifted; Irrawaddy (06 Aug 12) Journals Black Out Covers to Protest Press Restrictions

- **6 August:** The regime Censorship Board summoned editors of the *Envoy* and *Voice Weekly* and told them that they would be allowed to resume publications from 18 August.¹³⁰
- **9 August:** The regime formed a 20-member Myanmar Core Press Council (MCPC).¹³¹ The body, chaired by a retired Supreme Court Justice, was responsible for monitoring media, compiling a code of journalism ethics, and settling press-related disputes in the run-up to the adoption of a new media law and the establishment of a permanent Myanmar Press Council.¹³² However, on 12 August, the regime put the MCPC's operations on hold after various media industry figures expressed their concern over the body's composition, powers, and lack of independence.¹³³
- **24 August:** Police in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township rejected a request by CPF organizers to hold a 28 August rally calling for more press freedom.¹³⁴
- **25 August:** Police in Magwe, Magwe Division, detained and interrogated DVB reporter Zaw Pe aka Thura Thet Tin for several hours and subsequently charged him with interfering with a public official and trespassing on state property.¹³⁵ Zaw Pe was arrested after conducting interviews concerning scholarships awarded to Burmese students by a Japanese foundation at a local regime office.¹³⁶

DISPLACEMENT

China sends back Kachin refugees

From mid-August, Chinese authorities began to force thousands of Kachin refugees in camps in Yunnan Province back to Burma. As of 27 August, China forced around 4,900 refugees to return to Kachin State.¹³⁷ It was reported that Chinese authorities destroyed refugee shelters after forcing refugees to leave and prevented journalists from taking photographs.¹³⁸ Contradicting widespread independent reports, the Chinese Foreign Ministry claimed that "border inhabitants" returned on their own accord.¹³⁹ On 31 August, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that China had denied the UN access to the Kachin refugees being forcibly returned.¹⁴⁰

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US extends import ban

On 2 August, the US Congress voted to extend a ban on imports from Burma for one year under the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act.¹⁴¹ The legislation contained a waiver provision which may be enacted should Burma demonstrate sufficient progress towards addressing human rights and democracy concerns.¹⁴² US Congressman Joseph Crowley said that the renewal of the import ban would send a "strong signal" to Burma of Washington's support for the immediate release of all political prisoners, an end to violence against ethnic minorities, and the adoption of genuine democratic reforms.¹⁴³ On 10 August, President Barack Obama signed the legislation.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁰ Reuters (06 Aug 12) Myanmar lifts suspensions on journals after protests; AP (07 Aug 12) Myanmar censors lift ban on 2 magazines following rare protest by journalists; RFA (06 Aug 12) Ban on Journals Lifted

¹³¹ NLM (10 Aug 12) Formation of Myanmar Core Press Council

¹³² Xinhua (10 Aug 12) Myanmar gov't forms core press council; NLM (10 Aug 12) Formation of Myanmar Core Press Council; Irrawaddy (10 Aug 12) Burma Govt Forms Interim Press Council; Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) Questions over Press Council formation

¹³³ Myanmar Times (20 Aug 12) Govt agrees talks on press body; EMG (11 Aug 12) Myanmar Journalists Strongly Criticize Govt Appointed Press Council; DVB (14 Aug 12) Ministry delays interim press council's debut

¹³⁴ Irrawaddy (24 Aug 12) Press Protest Gets Red Light, as Journals Put on Trial; AFP (24 Aug 12) Myanmar press still fighting for true freedom

¹³⁵ DVB (27 Aug 12) DVB journalist questioned after being sued by civil servant; EMG (29 Aug 12) Local official sues reporter, parent over intrusion, disruption of duty

¹³⁶ DVB (27 Aug 12) DVB journalist questioned after being sued by civil servant; EMG (29 Aug 12) Local official sues reporter, parent over intrusion, disruption of duty

¹³⁷ Myanmar Times (27 Aug 12) China govt sends back thousands of refugees

¹³⁸ Irrawaddy (24 Aug 12) Forced Refugee Return Risks Lives: HRW; Irrawaddy (23 Aug 12) Kachin Refugees Forced Home by China; NYT (23 Aug 12) China Forces Ethnic Kachin Refugees Back to a Conflict Zone in Myanmar's North

¹³⁹ NYT (25 Aug 12) Chinese Deny Forcing Refugees to Myanmar

¹⁴⁰ Irrawaddy (31 Aug 12) China Denies UN Access to Returning Refugees

¹⁴¹ Reuters (02 Aug 12) US Congress reauthorizes import ban on Myanmar

¹⁴² Reuters (02 Aug 12) US Congress reauthorizes import ban on Myanmar

¹⁴³ AFP (03 Aug 12) US extends Myanmar import ban despite reforms

¹⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (14 Aug 12) Obama Extends Burma Sanctions for Another Year

India's military assistance

India continued to provide military assistance to the regime as part of ongoing efforts to counter insurgency in the Northeast States. On 1 August, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Vice-Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing arrived in India for a week-long visit. On 3 August, Min Aung Hlaing met with Indian Defense Minister AK Anthony and other high-ranking military officials.¹⁴⁵ During the visit, India pledged to train Tatmadaw personnel and provide more non-weapon equipment to Burma's regime.¹⁴⁶ Despite such military assistance, the regime failed to live up to its commitments to India. On 28 August, India's Minister of State for Home Affairs Mullanpally Ramachandran said that the regime continued to allow Burma's territory to be used as a safe haven for Indian insurgent groups.¹⁴⁷

ECONOMY

World Bank's return to Burma draws criticism

On 1 August, 25 years after it ceased operations in the country, the World Bank opened a country office in Rangoon.¹⁴⁸ On the same day, World Bank officials announced that the Bank was considering US\$85 million in grants for infrastructure and development projects in Burma's rural areas.¹⁴⁹ World Bank officials said that Burma would also have access to its interest-free loans once it cleared its outstanding debt of US\$397 million.¹⁵⁰ The Bank indicated it would provide assistance to help the regime to pay off the debt by January 2013.¹⁵¹

Numerous Burmese civil society organizations, including various ethnic-based NGOs, expressed their concern over the lack of transparency surrounding the World Bank's process of re-engagement with Burma.¹⁵² They urged the Bank to disclose details of their consultation plans, provisions that guaranteed transparency of the operations, and whether they had conducted an assessment of the situation in conflict-affected areas.¹⁵³ Civil society's concerns were further heightened on 14 August when regime National Planning and Economic Development Minister Tin Naing Thein announced that Burma would use the World Bank's US\$85 million grant for the establishment of "model villages" in over 300 townships across the country.¹⁵⁴

ADB highlights challenges

On 20 August, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) released a report titled "Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges."¹⁵⁵ The report said that Burma's economy could grow at 7-8% per year for a decade or more and that Burma could attain the status of 'middle-income' country by 2030 if the regime continued to pursue reforms.¹⁵⁶ However, the ADB identified major obstacles that may prevent Burma from reaching that goal:¹⁵⁷

- Weak macroeconomic management, reflected in chronic budget deficits financed by printing money.
- Extremely low tax revenue (Burma has the lowest tax revenue to GDP ratio in the Asia-Pacific region).

¹⁴⁵ IANS (04 Aug `12) Protests as India welcomes Myanmar army chief

¹⁴⁶ Hindustan Times (02 Aug 12) Eyeing closer ties, India to train Myanmar army men

PTI (03 Aug 12) India to train Myanmar military personnel

¹⁴⁷ ANI (28 Aug 12) Govt. has taken up issue of Indian insurgents using Myanmar territory: Ramachandran; PTI (28 Aug 12) NE insurgent groups using Myanmar as safe sanctuary: Govt

¹⁴⁸ AP (01 Aug 12) World Bank set to resume aid to Myanmar; DPA (01 Aug 12) World Bank opens office in Myanmar

¹⁴⁹ Reuters (01 Aug 12) World Bank to help Myanmar clear arrears; WSJ (01 Aug 12) World Bank Prepares \$85 Million in New Myanmar Grants; BBC (01 Aug 12) Burma: World Bank preparing \$85m aid to boost reforms

¹⁵⁰ World Bank (01 Aug 12) World Bank Group Prepares First Grants to Support Myanmar's Reforms; WSJ (01 Aug 12) World Bank Prepares \$85 Million in New Myanmar Grants; RFA (01 Aug 12) Development Banks Back in Burma

¹⁵¹ Reuters (01 Aug 12) World Bank to help Myanmar clear arrears; BBC (01 Aug 12) Burma: World Bank preparing \$85m aid to boost reforms; RFA (01 Aug 12) Development Banks Back in Burma

¹⁵² DVB (10 Aug 12) World Bank grant could 'exacerbate' problems in border regions; IPS (17 Aug 12) World Bank Releases Draft Strategy for Myanmar

¹⁵³ DVB (10 Aug 12) World Bank grant could 'exacerbate' problems in border regions; IPS (17 Aug 12) World Bank Releases Draft Strategy for Myanmar

¹⁵⁴ Xinhua (15 Aug 12) Myanmar to use world bank grant for setting up model villages

¹⁵⁵ Xinhua (20 Aug 12) Myanmar hopeful to become middle income nation by 2030: ADB

¹⁵⁶ AFP (20 Aug 12) Myanmar could be mid income nation by 2030: ADB

¹⁵⁷ ADB (20 Aug 12) Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges

- Underdeveloped financial sector, which makes access to finance limited - particularly in rural areas.
- Inadequate infrastructure, particularly involving roads, access to electricity, and telecommunications.
- Low education and health indicators.
- Limited economic diversification, which makes Burma economically unstable due to fluctuations in the demand and price of commodities - particularly natural resources.

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN AUGUST

1	Maj Soe Naing replaces Maj Aung Myo Myat as a military-appointed MP in the Irrawaddy Division Parliament. ¹⁵⁸
3	Regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin meets with South Korean FM Kim Sung-hwan in Seoul to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation. ¹⁵⁹
4	President Thein Sein and representatives from 14 political parties meet in Naypyidaw to discuss issues related to establishing an inclusive dialogue process with all ethnic groups on peace and economic development. ¹⁶⁰
7	Regime Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min and Industry Minister Soe Thein meet with leaders of the 88 Generation Students in Mandalay and donate one million kyat (US\$1,145) to the group for celebrations marking the anniversary of the 1988 uprising. ¹⁶¹
8	About 1,000 people attend a ceremony organized by the 88 Generation Students to commemorate the anniversary of the 1988 uprising at a monastery in Mandalay. ¹⁶²
8	During a rally to mark the anniversary of the 1988 uprising in Rangoon, about 1,000 people call for the release of all remaining political prisoners and the recognition of 8 August as a national holiday. ¹⁶³
9	Biweekly Eleven News journal says that of Burma's total exports - worth US\$2.61 billion in the first four months of fiscal year 2012-2013 - natural gas accounted for US\$859.72 million (or 33%). ¹⁶⁴
9	During talks with Turkish FM Ahmet Davutoğlu in Naypyidaw, President Thein Sein downplays the severity of ongoing persecution against Rohingya as "hairsplitting of the media". ¹⁶⁵
10	Leaders of 14 political parties call for the removal of UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana because of his alleged bias in assessing the situation in Arakan State. ¹⁶⁶
10	Regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin rejects a proposal for an emergency meeting of ASEAN FMs to discuss the "humanitarian crisis" in Arakan State. ¹⁶⁷
11	Burmese journalists form the Myanmar Journalist Association. ¹⁶⁸
12	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with President Thein Sein, regime Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min, and Industry Minister Soe Thein in Naypyidaw. ¹⁶⁹
12	In an address to the first meeting of the regime's peacemaking group, Vice-President Mauk Kham says that the ultimate goal of peace agreements is to build a single Tatmadaw in which all armed groups can serve in accordance with the 2008 constitution. ¹⁷⁰
12	Around 400 people, including KNU and KNLA officials, attend a Karen Martyrs' Day commemoration in Myawaddy Township, Karen State. ¹⁷¹
13	Weekly journal 7 Days News says that Thai Air Asia will launch direct flights between Bangkok and Mandalay starting on 4 October. ¹⁷²
13	President Thein Sein says that Rohingya lack "proper education" and that his administration will open schools to give them "modern education." ¹⁷³
14	Three hundred and one People's Assembly MPs - including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - submit a petition calling for the impeachment of all nine Constitutional Tribunal judges after the court's 28 March decision that parliamentary committees are not "Union-level" bodies. ¹⁷⁴

¹⁵⁸ NLM (02 Aug 12) One Defence Services Personnel Region Hluttaw Representative substituted

¹⁵⁹ Xinhua (03 Aug 12) S. Korean, Myanmar FMs discuss expanding ties

¹⁶⁰ Kaowao News (07 Aug 12) Mon Curriculum Brought to President Thein Sein

¹⁶¹ Irrawaddy (08 Aug 12) Thein Sein Reaches Out to 88 Generation

¹⁶² RFA (08 Aug 12) Official Support for 88 Rallies

¹⁶³ RFA (08 Aug 12) Official Support for 88 Rallies

¹⁶⁴ Xinhua (09 Aug 12) Myanmar's foreign trade hits over 5 bln USD in 4 months

¹⁶⁵ VOA (10 Aug 12) Burma: Sectarian Violence Not About Race or Religion

¹⁶⁶ Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) Parties call for Quintana removal

¹⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (17 Aug 12) Burma Rebuffs Asean Bid for Role in Arakan State

¹⁶⁸ Myanmar Times (13 Aug 12) New journalism association formed

¹⁶⁹ AP (12 Aug 12) Opposition leader Suu Kyi meets Myanmar president

¹⁷⁰ Xinhua (13 Aug 12) Myanmar vice president calls for efforts to bring peace to country

¹⁷¹ Karen News (15 Aug 12) 62nd Karen Martyr's Day commemorated widely

¹⁷² Xinhua (13 Aug 12) Thai Air Asia to launch Mandalay-Bangkok direct flight

¹⁷³ VOA (14 Aug 12) Burma's President Tells VOA He Will Open Schools for Rohingya

¹⁷⁴ RFA (15 Aug 12) MPs Want Tribunal Sacked; Myanmar Times (20 Aug 12) Hluttaw sets Aug 21 deadline for tribunal members to resign

15	NLD opens an office in Naypyidaw's Zabuthiri Township. ¹⁷⁵
15	Taiwan's shipping company Evergreen says it will start a regular Singapore-Rangoon freight service on 21 August. ¹⁷⁶
15	Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Vice Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing meets with Thai Defense Minister Sukumpol Suwanatat and Thai Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Surasak Rounroengrom in Naypyidaw. ¹⁷⁷
16	A delegation of 20 US companies concludes a five-day tour of Burma aimed at exploring investment opportunities in the country. ¹⁷⁸
17	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Zomi Congress for Democracy. ¹⁷⁹
17	In a message sent to both houses of Parliament, President Thein Sein accuses Buddhist monks, politicians, and some ethnic Rakhine figures of fomenting hatred against Rohingya in Arakan State. ¹⁸⁰
18	Around 600 people, including regime officials and NLD, DKBA, KNU, and KNLA members, attend the opening ceremony of a KNU liaison office in Myawaddy, Karen State. ¹⁸¹
20	Constitutional Tribunal judges say they will not resign because of their 28 March ruling on parliamentary committees. ¹⁸²
22	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw. ¹⁸³
22	Regime authorities in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, stop more than 500 residents from 12 villages from marching to a local regime office to protest against the confiscation of their land for the expansion of Burma's largest copper mine in the Letpadaung mountain range. ¹⁸⁴
24	One hundred and sixty-two National Assembly MPs sign a petition calling for the resignation of all nine Constitutional Tribunal judges. ¹⁸⁵
24	An official from the President's Office says that members of the judicial and the executive appointed by President Thein Sein have submitted a declaration of their assets in compliance with a 26 July presidential order. ¹⁸⁶
27	President Thein Sein appoints Win Ko as Election Commission member. ¹⁸⁷
27	National Parliament approves by a vote of 447 to 168 with 4 abstentions a resolution urging the Constitutional Tribunal to issue a statement admitting that it incorrectly ruled on the status of parliamentary committees on 28 March. ¹⁸⁸
29	People's Assembly forms a 15-member committee to determine whether the Constitutional Tribunal acted against the constitution. ¹⁸⁹
29	US President Barack Obama orders a waiver on visa bans imposed upon certain regime officials to allow President Thein Sein to travel to New York to attend the UN General Assembly in September. ¹⁹⁰
30	Burma's regime publishes the list of 2,082 names - 1,147 foreigners and 935 Burmese - removed from a blacklist of 6,165. ¹⁹¹
30	Director of the President's Office Col Zaw Htay says the regime will not allow Burmese citizens accused of treason or those who took asylum in a foreign country to return home. ¹⁹²
30	An 11-member coalition of Kachin organizations issues a statement calling on the regime to immediately end its offensive against the KIA and pursue genuine political dialogue. ¹⁹³

¹⁷⁵ EMG (18 Aug 12) NLD opens its office in Nay Pyi Taw

¹⁷⁶ Irrawaddy (18 Aug 12) Burma Business Roundup (Saturday, Aug. 18)

¹⁷⁷ Xinhua (16 Aug 12) Myanmar, Thailand stress cooperation in bilateral security, rule of law

¹⁷⁸ Myanmar Times (20 Aug 12) US trade delegation visits

¹⁷⁹ NLM (18 Aug 12) Zomi Congress for Democracy to register as political party

¹⁸⁰ AFP (24 Aug 12) Thein Sein decries hatred

¹⁸¹ Karen News (19 Aug 12) 600 attend KNU opening of its fourth liaison office

¹⁸² Mizzima News (22 Aug 12) Will Parliament impeach the Constitutional Tribunal?

¹⁸³ AP (22 Aug 12) Myanmar opposition leader Suu Kyi meets president

¹⁸⁴ Irrawaddy (23 Aug 12) Copper Mine Land Grabs Protest Heats Up

¹⁸⁵ Xinhua (27 Aug 12) Myanmar parliament passes resolution over constitutional tribunal decision dispute

¹⁸⁶ EMG (26 Aug 12) Cabinet members disclose assets to President

¹⁸⁷ NLM (28 Aug 12) Union Election Commission member appointed

¹⁸⁸ NLM (28 Aug 12) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw invited as full-fledged partner of Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership

¹⁸⁹ Xinhua (30 Aug 12) Myanmar Lower House to probe into impeachment against constitutional tribunal

¹⁹⁰ AFP (30 Aug 12) US paves way for Myanmar president's visit

¹⁹¹ Xinhua (30 Aug 12) Myanmar publishes lifted detailed list of over 2,000 black-listed persons

¹⁹² RFA (30 Aug 12) Blacklist Names Released

¹⁹³ Mizzima News (30 Aug 12) Kachin call for halt of Burmese government offensives

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