Police fire on Letpadaung protesters

On 22 December, police fired live ammunition into a crowd of local residents demonstrating near the Letpadaung (Monywa) copper mine in Sagaing Division, killing one woman and injuring up to 20 other people. Villagers were protesting against the construction of a fence around the mine.

Authorities arrest 14 Michaungkan land confiscation protesters

Regime authorities charge seven protesters in Rangoon under Article 19 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law.

Heavy fighting continues in Kachin and Shan States

The fighting and “bureaucratic delays” block UN aid convoys from reaching IDP camps. Ethnic armed groups ask for more international observers at the next round of formal peace talks.

International human rights groups urge the dismissal of the Tatmadaw’s case against a Kachin man who accused soldiers of killing his daughter.

President Thein Sein submits the ‘National Race and Religion Protection’ package’s four discriminatory bills to the National Parliament.

In two separate cases, authorities charge and detain a former NLD member and three Rangoon bar managers for ‘insulting’ Buddhism.

UNODC report says Burma remains the top opium producer in Southeast Asia.

A military tribunal sentences a Tatmadaw officer to two years in prison for signing an NLD petition to amend Article 436 of the 2008 constitution.

Two new reports highlight labor rights issues for migrant workers from Burma in Thailand.

Tavoyan Women’s Union (TWU) calls for a stop to the Tavoy [Dawei] SEZ, based on its damaging impacts on the livelihoods, food security, and safety of women in the project area.

KEY STORY

Police fire on Letpadaung protesters

On 22 December, police fired live ammunition into a crowd of local residents demonstrating near the Letpadaung (Monywa) copper mine in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, killing one woman and injuring up to 20 other people. Villagers were protesting against the construction of a fence around the mine.

1 DVB (22 Dec 14) Riot police open fire on Latpadaung protestors; AP (22 Dec 14) Woman Fatally Shot at Myanmar Mine Protest; Reuters (22 Dec 14) Police fire on Myanmar protesters, one dead, 20 hurt; reports; Irawaddy (22 Dec 14) Police Kill Villager in Copper Mine Standoff; NYT (22 Dec 14) Woman Killed While Protesting Chinese Copper Mine in Myanmar; WSJ (22 Dec 14) Protesters Clash With Authorities in Myanmar Over Copper Mine; RFA (22 Dec 14) Woman Shot Dead During Clash
their land by Chinese company Wanbao, the mine’s operator. The following day, police renewed their attacks, firing rubber bullets at demonstrators and injuring two. The events followed an earlier confrontation near the copper mine on 13 December which left two protesters injured. In that instance, police fired rubber bullets into a crowd of farmers protesting against the fencing off of their land.

In reaction to the police crackdowns at the Letpadaung mine site, protesters took to the streets in other parts of Burma:

- **27 December**: More than 500 demonstrators, including Buddhist monks, protested near the Chinese consulate in Mandalay to demand the closure of the Letpadaung mine and action to be taken in response to the police violence.

- **29 December**: Around 300 protesters clashed with police in front of the Chinese embassy in Rangoon. The following day, police in Rangoon’s Dagon Township arrested and charged four of the activists involved – Naw Ohn Hla, Nay Myo Zin, Sein Htwe, and Tin Htut Paing – under Articles 353 and 505(b) of the Criminal Code.

In addition, civil and political groups also voiced their concerns over the crackdown:

- **24 December**: The NLD released a statement criticizing the regime and Wanbao for failing to address the project’s negative impacts and failing to implement recommendations from the commission charged with investigating the November 2012 police crackdown at the mine site. [See March 2013 Burma Bulletin]

- **25 December**: Nine CSOs involved in Burma’s Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) candidacy issued a statement condemning the regime’s response to the protests, which highlighted possible barriers to Burma’s bid for EITI membership.

Despite the crackdown, on 29 December, more than 400 local residents returned to the Letpadaung copper mine site to resume protests. Some of the protesters tore down a fence constructed by Wanbao around a disputed patch of land in Sete Village, Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division.

**Authorities disperse, arrest Michaungkan protesters**

In December, authorities took punitive action against protesters from Michaungkan Village, Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division. The protesters had been camped out in Maha Bandoola Park, opposite the Rangoon City Hall in Kyauktada Township, since 24 March to demand the return of

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With Police Over Myanmar Mine Project; Mizzima News (23 Dec 14) Police kill villager during Letpadaung copper mine protest; DVB (25 Dec 14) Letpadaung protestor was killed by gunshot, says coroner

*Mizzima News (23 Dec 14) Police kill villager during Letpadaung copper mine protest

*DVB (23 Dec 14) Two more injured at Latpadaung as police fire rubber bullets; AP (23 Dec 14) Myanmar Villagers Remain in Standoff Over Mine; Irrawaddy (23 Dec 14) More Villagers Injured in Letpadaung Mine Protests; Mizzima News (24 Dec 14) Two people ‘shot’ in further clashes at Letpadaung copper mine; RFA (23 Dec 14) Clashes Continue Over Myanmar Mining Project

* DVB (14 Dec 14) Two injured as Latpadaung protestors clash with police; EMG (16 Dec 14) Mine security fires on protesting Sagaing villagers

* AFP (27 Dec 14) Hundreds protest against China-backed mine in Myanmar; DVB (28 Dec 14) Mandalay protestors call for justice in Letpadaung; EMG (28 Dec 14) Protesters demand answers from China over mine death

*Mizzima News (30 Dec 14) Mine protestors clash with police at Chinese embassy; DVB (30 Dec 14) Nay Myo Zin, Naw Ohn Hla arrested over Letpadaung protest; EMG (30 Dec 14) Letpadaungtaung protestors clash with police at Chinese embassy

*Irrawaddy (30 Dec 14) Three Activists Arrested for Anti-Mine Protest in Rangoon; DVB (30 Dec 14) Nay Myo Zin, Naw Ohn Hla arrested over Letpadaung protest; EMG (30 Dec 14) Three activists including Nay Myo Zin arrested and sent to Insein Prison; Mizzima News (31 Dec 14) Activists arrested for mine protest outside Chinese embassy; RFA (31 Dec 14) Four Charged in Myanmar Anti-Mine Protest

*Irrawaddy (25 Dec 14) Wanbao, Govt Failed To Address Mine Project Concerns: NLD; EMG (25 Dec 14) NLD statement implicated govt in Letpadaungtaung clashes

*Irrawaddy (26 Dec 14) CSOs Condemn Govt Response to Mine Protests

*Mizzima News (30 Dec 14) Warning shots fired as Letpadaung protests continue; EMG (29 Dec 14) Letpadaungtaung protestors resume demonstrations

*DVB (30 Dec 14) Latpadaung villagers tear down Wanbao fence; EMG (30 Dec 14) Letpadaungtaung protestors resume demonstrations

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land confiscated by the Tatmadaw in the 1990s. On 12 December, around 20 of the demonstrators expanded the sit-in to the pavement in front of Rangoon City Hall, prompting punitive actions:

- **18 December:** Authorities arrested activist Wai Lu and charged him the next day under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code for assisting the protesters, despite having been absent from the protest site.
- **22 December:** Authorities charged five protesters under Articles 341, 342, and 343 of the Criminal Code for obstructing the entrance to Rangoon City Hall.
- **23 December:** Police forcibly dispersed the sit-in protest outside Rangoon City Hall, arresting 14 of the protesters and charging them for the protest under Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law and Article 341 of the Criminal Code.

**Rangoon authorities charge peaceful protesters**

In December, Rangoon authorities used Article 19 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law, which stipulates punishments for demonstrators who stray outside officially designated protest areas, to charge activists for peaceful protests.

- **18 December:** Rangoon’s Hlaing Township Court charged Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF) leader Htin Kyaw under Articles 18 and 19 for his involvement in a March protest against land confiscation in Rangoon’s Mayangone Township. [See *October 2014 Burma Bulletin* for Htin Kyaw’s most recent sentence]
- **19 December:** Police in Rangoon’s Kyimyindine Township charged activist Win Htike Hein under Article 19 for organizing a rally on 8 December to commemorate Gen Aung San’s 100th birthday. Around 200 people attended the rally.
- **21 December:** Police in Rangoon’s South Okkalapa Township charged five activists – Ko Ko Gyi, Saw Naing, Myo Khine, Naing Ko Lin, and Aung Maung – under Article 19 for staging a protest earlier in the day against a planned construction project on the site of a former public park in South Okkalapa Township.

**INSIDE BURMA**

**Aid to IDPs blocked as clashes intensify in Kachin and Shan States**

In December, Tatmadaw troops continued to clash in Kachin and Shan States with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA).

- **8 December:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA forces in Namhsan Township, Shan State.
- **9 December:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA forces in Kaukme Township, Shan State.
- **9 December:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 215 clashed with KIA, TNLA, and MNDAA forces in Kunlong Township, Shan State.

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12 *Irrawaddy* (03 Dec 14) Michaungkan’s Displaced Level Ultimatum, Vow to ‘Escalate’ Protest; *Irrawaddy* (23 Dec 14) Police Arrest 14, Dismantle Protest Camp at Rangoon City Hall
13 *DVB* (14 Dec 14) Michaungkan protesters light candles in front of Rangoon City Hall; EMG (15 Dec 14) MP pledges to forward case of camp-in demonstrators to parliamentary speaker; *Irrawaddy* (03 Dec 14) Michaungkan’s Displaced Level Ultimatum, Vow to ‘Escalate’ Protest; *Irrawaddy* (23 Dec 14) Police Arrest 14, Dismantle Protest Camp at Rangoon City Hall
14 *RFA* (19 Dec 14) Myanmar Activist Charged With ‘Defamation’ Following Arrest; *Myanmar Times* (19 Dec 14) Activist charged with incitement
15 *Mizzima News* (23 Dec 14) Five land-grab protesters charged for blocking Yangon City Hall
16 *DVB* (23 Dec 14) Rangoon City Hall protesters forcibly evicted; *Irrawaddy* (23 Dec 14) Police Arrest 14, Dismantle Protest Camp at Rangoon City Hall
17 *Irrawaddy* (22 Dec 14) Rangoon Police Charge Ko Ko Gyi, 4 Other Activists for Unauthorized Protest
18 *EMG* (19 Dec 14) Democracy activist faces more charges
19 *Irrawaddy* (22 Dec 14) Rangoon Police Charge Ko Ko Gyi, 4 Other Activists for Unauthorized Protest
20 *DVB* (22 Dec 14) Activists charged for staging unauthorised protest; *Irrawaddy* (22 Dec 14) Rangoon Police Charge Ko Ko Gyi, 4 Other Activists for Unauthorized Protest
21 *DVB* (12 Dec 14) Kachin, Palaung, Kokang forces clash with govt units in Muse
22 *DVB* (12 Dec 14) Kachin, Palaung, Kokang forces clash with govt units in Muse
23 *Kachinland News* (15 Dec 14) Fierce Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Troops and Burmese Army
• **10 December**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA, TNLA, and KIA forces in Kunlong Township, Shan State.24
• **10 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 215 clashed with KIA, TNLA, and MNDA forces near Sai Hkau Village, Kutkai Township, Shan State.25
• **10 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIDs 11 and 55 clashed with MNDA, TNLA, and KIA forces in Kutkai Township, Shan State.26
• **10 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIDs 11 and 55 clashed with MNDA, TNLA, and KIA forces in Mantong Township, Shan State.27
• **12 December**: Tatmadaw troops and Tatmadaw-backed militia clashed with KIA, MNDA, and TNLA forces near Mung Paw Village, Kunlong Township, Shan State.28
• **13 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LID 77 clashed with SSA-S forces in Kyaukme Township, Shan State.29
• **13 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIDs 11 and 55 fired mortar shells at TNLA forces near Nam Zalap Village, Hsenwi Township, Shan State.30
• **13 December**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA, TNLA, and MNDA forces between Nam Zalap and Na Ti Villages, Hsenwi Township, Shan State.31
• **14 December**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with SSA-S forces in Mongpan Township, Shan State.32
• **19 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 602 seized a KIA outpost in Momauk Township, Kachin State, and killed two KIA soldiers.33
• **27 December**: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 5 launched an artillery attack and captured a KIA post in Kamaing, Hpakant Township, Kachin State.34

The fighting has had a severe impact on civilians. On 9 December, local NGO Kachin Refugee Committee (KRC) reported that the regime had blocked humanitarian aid from reaching IDP camps in Kachin State since October.35 On 16 December, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) confirmed that conflict and “bureaucratic delays” by the regime in issuing permits had prevented UN convoys from providing aid to nearly 30,000 IDPs in KIO-controlled areas since the start of October.36 Meanwhile, on 13 December, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA caused 50 residents of Hpakant Township, Kachin State, to flee to a church compound for shelter.37

**Peace talks resume without key negotiators**

On 22-23 December, five members of the ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team met with the regime peacemaking team in Rangoon, resuming dialogue for the first time since the last round of formal peace talks in Kachin. The talks were also the first time the two sides met since the 19 November Tatmadaw attack on the Kachin Independence Army’s (KIA) headquarters at Laiza, Momauk Township, Kachin State.38 [See November 2014 Burma Bulletin]

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24 Reuters (15 Dec 14) Guerrillas killed 7 soldiers in ambush last week, Myanmar military says; GNLM (15 Dec 14) Remnant Kokang insurgents ambush Tatmadaw columns; DVB (12 Dec 14) Kachin, Palang, Kokang forces clash with govt units in Muse; Irrawaddy (15 Dec 14) Clashes Kill 7 Burmese Soldiers in Eastern Burma; DVB (15 Dec 14) 7 govt troops killed in N. Shan State clash; VOA (15 Dec 14) Myanmar Rebels Kill 7 Soldiers, Wound 20 Near China Border; RFA (15 Dec 14) Kokang Rebel Attack Kills Seven Myanmar Troops: State Media; AP (15 Dec 14) MYANMAR ARMY: ETHNIC REBELS KILL 7 GOV'T TROOPS
25 Kachinland News (15 Dec 14) Fierce Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Troops and Burmese Army
26 SHAN (19 Dec 14) Fighting Between Government Troops and FUA Escalates
27 SHAN (19 Dec 14) Fighting Between Government Troops and FUA Escalates
28 Kachinland News (15 Dec 14) Fierce Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Troops and Burmese Army
29 SHAN (17 Dec 14) Government Forces and RCSS/SSA Resume Fighting
30 Kachinland News (15 Dec 14) Fierce Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Troops and Burmese Army
31 Kachinland News (15 Dec 14) Fierce Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Troops and Burmese Army; SHAN (19 Dec 14) Fighting Between Government Troops and FUA Escalates
32 SHAN (17 Dec 14) Government Forces and RCSS/SSA Resume Fighting
33 Kachin News Group (27 Dec 14) Burmese army attack kills 2 KIA soldiers; Kachin News Group (30 Dec 14) Burmese army seizes KIO post in Hpakant
34 DVB (30 Dec 14) Burmese army captures KIA outpost near Hpakant; Kachin News Group (30 Dec 14) Burmese army seizes KIO post in Hpakant
35 DVB (10 Dec 14) Kachin IDPs wait for aid as winter sets in
36 OCHA (16 Dec 14) Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin. Issue. 1 to 30 November; CNA (17 Dec 14) UN says aid to parts of Myanmar’s rebel-held north ‘stalled’; Irrawaddy (17 Dec 14) Govt Delays Aid Distribution in Northern Burma: UN; Kachin News Group (19 Dec 14) Delay in permits behind Kachin aid convoy halt says UN
37 Kachinland News (18 Dec 14) Fresh military tensions force villagers to flee Hpakant
38 DVB (24 Dec 14) Compromises reached on most ceasefire issues; Irrawaddy (23 Dec 14) Ethnic Leaders Propose Talks in Kachin Capital; EMG (25 Dec 14) NCCT proposes additional observers to ceasefire talks; GNLM (24 Dec 14) UPWC-NCCT nationwide ceasefire accord coordination meeting concludes, moving closer to final deal in mid-January meeting; Irrawaddy (22 Dec 14) Fighting Between Government Troops and FUA Escalates

Key members of the ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team, including chief negotiator Nai Hong Sar and KIA Deputy Chief-of-Staff Brig Gen Gun Maw, did not attend. The ethnic armed groups asked the regime to provide an explanation of the Laiza attack and outline measures to prevent any future attacks. The ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team suggested that the next meeting take place in their territory, in Myitkyina, Kachin State, and also asked for more international observers for the seventh round of formal peace talks in January.

Rights groups call for dismissal of charges against Kachin man

On 8 December, six international human rights organizations called on the regime to dismiss charges against a Kachin man, Brang Shawng, who was charged by the Tatmadaw in February 2013 for making “false charges” against the Tatmadaw. The charge is based on letters Brang Shawng sent to President Thein Sein and the regime Human Rights Commission, calling for an investigation into the 13 September 2012 killing of his 14-year-old daughter, Ja Seng Ing, during a Tatmadaw attack in Hpakant, Kachin State. He could face up to two years in prison if convicted.

On 6 December, ten Kachin CSOs released their report, “Who Killed Ja Seng Ing?”. The report included testimonies from 16 witnesses who supported Brang Shawng’s statement that a Tatmadaw soldier fatally shot his daughter.

‘National Race and Religion Protection’ package submitted to Parliament

On 1 December, the President’s Office announced its submission of four bills, referred to as the ‘National Race and Religion Protection’ package, to the National Parliament. The four bills in the package are: the Religious Conversion Bill, which was published in May 2014 [See May 2014 Burma Bulletin]; the Interfaith Marriage Bill; the Monogamy Bill; and the Population Control Bill. The bills target the Muslim population but will consequently affect other religious minorities.

The Religious Conversion Bill would require anyone wishing to convert to another religion to submit a detailed application giving reasons for conversion and submit to an interview by a township registration board. Anyone found guilty of violating the law will be subject to a maximum of two years’ imprisonment and a 200,000 kyat (US$200) fine.

The Interfaith Marriage Bill would require Buddhist women and men of other faiths to apply for permission to marry from local authorities. Failure to do so could result in up to three years’ imprisonment and a 50,000 kyat (US$50) fine.

The Monogamy Bill would impose a seven-year prison sentence and a fine for any act of polygamy or infidelity under Article 494 of the Criminal Code. Any spouse found guilty of polygamy or infidelity would also forfeit all property rights.

The Population Control Bill would allow the regime to designate areas, based on socio-economic indicators, in which women would have to wait 36 months between pregnancies.
Regime uses legal action to ‘defend’ Buddhism

In December, the regime pursued two legal cases in the name of ‘defending’ Buddhism.

On 10 December, police in Rangoon’s Bahan Township arrested V Gastro Bar owner, Tun Theurein, and two managers, Htut Ko Ko Lwin and Philip Blackwood, for ‘insulting religion’ by posting an image of the Buddha wearing headphones on Facebook as part of a bar promotion.55 On 11 December, Rangoon’s Bahan Township Court denied bail to all three defendants.53 The court provided no translator during the proceedings for Blackwood, a New Zealand citizen. He was also denied visitors while being held at Rangoon’s Insein prison.54 On 18 December, Bahan Township Court formally charged the three defendants under Articles 295, 295(a), and 188 of the Criminal Code.55

On 17 December, Chaung U Township Court, Sagaing Division, charged and denied bail to NLD member Htin Lin Oo.56 The Sagaing Division Immigration Department had filed a lawsuit on 20 November against Htin Lin Oo under Articles 295(a) and 298 of the Criminal Code for ‘insulting’ Buddhism. The charges related to a 23 October speech Htin Lin Oo gave in Chaung U Township, in which he criticized the Organization for the Protection of National Race and Religion (OPNRR) and said Buddhism was not compatible with extreme nationalism.57

Burma still produces and uses landmines, endangers civilians

On 3 December, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) released its “Landmine Monitor 2014.” The report found that Burma was the only nation besides Syria whose state armies used antipersonnel landmines in 2013 and 2014.58 Burma was one of only four nations identified as active producers of antipersonnel mines.59

In addition, on 17 December, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said landmines in Burma continued to pose a “serious threat” to civilians, including children, noting that Norwegian People’s Aid had documented 46 civilian landmine victims in 2014.60

Burma still top opium producer in Southeast Asia

On 8 December, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released its report “Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014 – Lao PDR, Myanmar.” The report found that:61

- Burma remained the world’s second-largest opium producer after Afghanistan.
- While national levels of opium production and cultivation decreased for the first time since 2006, opium production levels increased in Kachin and Northern Shan States by 11% and 2% respectively.
- Illicit drug use in northern Burma skyrocketed in 2014, with 83% more opium users, 115% more heroin users, and 87% more amphetamine users than in 2013.

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52 AFP (11 Dec 14) VGastro.bar manager faces court hearing over Buddha imagery; BBC (11 Dec 14) Myanmar bar accused of insulting Buddhism in flyer; DVB (11 Dec 14) NZ bar manager arrested in Buddha insult storm; Irrawaddy (11 Dec 14) Police Arrest New Zealander, 2 Burmese for Promotion Insulting Buddhism; AP (12 Dec 14) Myanmar Bar Manager Accused of Insulting Buddhism
53 AFP (11 Dec 14) NZ bar manager denied bail in Myanmar over Buddha promo; Irrawaddy (11 Dec 14) Court Accepts Charges Against New Zealander, 2 Burmese for Insulting Buddhism
54 Mizzima News (11 Dec 14) New Zealand bar manager struggles for effective representation, says friend; DVB (13 Dec 14) Buddha Bar storm: lawyers refuse to represent Blackwood; Mizzima News (12 Dec 14) No visitors for New Zealand Bar Manager, including lawyer, says friend
55 DVB (18 Dec 14) Buddha Bar storm: charges upheld, trial set for 26 Dec; Irrawaddy (18 Dec 14) NZ National May Face 4 Years for Insulting Religion: Lawyer
56 Irrawaddy (17 Dec 14) NLD Member Denied Bail at Religious Offence Trial; Reuters (17 Dec 14) Myanmar court jails former opposition official accused of insulting Buddhism; EMG (17 Dec 14) Court denies writer Htin Lin Oo’s bail; DVB (25 Dec 14) Former NLD official sued for ‘insulting religion’
57 Irrawaddy (08 Dec 14) NLD Member Prosecuted for ‘Wounding Religious Feelings’; DVB (25 Dec 14) Former NLD official sued for ‘insulting religion’
58 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (03 Dec 14) Landmine Monitor 2014
59 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (03 Dec 14) Landmine Monitor 2014
60 OCHA (16 Dec 14) Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue: 1 to 30 November
61 UNODC (08 Dec 14) Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014 - Lao PDR, Myanmar
Tatmadaw soldier sentenced for supporting constitutional reform

On 5 December, a military tribunal in Maymyo Township, Mandalay Division, sentenced Maj Kyaw Zwar Win to two years in prison under Articles 41(e) and 65 of the Military Code. He was sentenced for signing an NLD and 88 Generation Peace and Open Society petition in April calling for the amendment of Article 436 of the 2008 constitution. Consistent with the practice of court martial in Burma, authorities did not allow Kyaw Zwar Win a lawyer. Tatmadaw authorities detained Kyaw Zwar Win in early April and did not permit any visitors.

Burma 8th worst jailer of journalists worldwide

In December, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released its annual census of media professionals imprisoned worldwide. Burma appeared on the list for the first time since 2011, ranking as the 8th worst jailer of journalists, with 10 media professionals currently imprisoned. CPJ also highlighted the regime’s use of “draconian and outdated security laws” to prosecute media professionals from Unity Weekly and Bi Mon Te Nay journals.

DISPLACEMENT

Poor conditions for Burmese in Thailand, Malaysia

In December, Thai and Malaysian authorities continued punitive measures against undocumented Burmese migrants. On 10 December, Thai police killed one, injured 39, and arrested 54 Burmese migrants who were attempting to avoid a checkpoint between Chumpon and Ranong Provinces, Thailand. On 16 December, Malaysian anti-trafficking police in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Malaysia, arrested 76 Burmese migrants.

In addition, two reports released in December highlighted the plight of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand.

- 18 December: World Vision published its “Vulnerability Report: Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region,” which surveyed Thai people living on the Thai-Burma border about practices and opinions relating to migrant workers in Thailand. According to the report, most Burmese migrants in Thailand are trafficked or smuggled into the country. The report also stated that many Thai people witnessed cases of child labor in dangerous working conditions, excessive work hours, and employers beating Burmese migrant workers.

- 18 December: Clean Clothes Campaign and the MAP Foundation released their report “Migrant Workers in Thailand’s Garment Factories.” The report found that Thai clothing factories that employed migrant workers from the region, including workers from Burma, flout key labor laws, including minimum wage requirements, justification for dismissal, and constraints on working hours.

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62 RFA (05 Dec 14) Army Officer Jailed For Endorsing Constitutional Reform in Myanmar; DPA (06 Dec 14) Myanmar jails army major for supporting charter change; DVB (08 Dec 14) Army officer jailed for signing Article 436 petition; AFP (09 Dec 14) Major jailed for supporting reduced role of Myanmar military
63 Reuters (08 Dec 14) Myanmar Officer Jailed for Backing Smaller Army Role in Politics
64 RFA (05 Dec 14) Army Officer Jailed For Endorsing Constitutional Reform in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (27 Nov 14) Family Worried Over Soldier Held After Signing NLD Charter Petition; Reuters (08 Dec 14) Myanmar Officer Jailed for Backing Smaller Army Role in Politics; DPA (06 Dec 14) Myanmar army major for supporting charter change
65 CPJ (17 Dec 14) China is world’s worst jailer of the press; global tally second worst on record; CPJ (09 Dec 14) 2014 prison census: 220 journalists jailed worldwide
66 CPJ (17 Dec 14) China is world’s worst jailer of the press; global tally second worst on record; Irrawaddy (18 Dec 14) Burma Among World’s ‘Top 10 Jailers of Journalists’
67 CPJ (17 Dec 14) China is world’s worst jailer of the press; global tally second worst on record; Irrawaddy (18 Dec 14) Burma Among World’s ‘Top 10 Jailers of Journalists’
68 EMG (16 Dec 14) One migrant killed as fleeing vehicle overturns
69 Bernama (16 Dec 14) 76 Myanmar Illegal Immigrants Detained At Bukit Kayu Hitam
70 Clean Clothes Foundation, MAP (18 Dec 14) Migrant Workers in Thailand’s Garment Factories; Mizzima News (20 Dec 14) Myanmar workers ‘suffer wage theft’ in Thai garment industry
UNHCR report shows increases in exodus from Arakan State

On 5 December, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released its report “Irregular Maritime Movements January – November 2014.” The report found that from January to November 2014, approximately 53,000 people, many of whom were Rohingya, left on boats from the Burma-Bangladesh border, including 21,000 since October, a 37% increase over the same period in 2013.71 The report estimated that 540 people who left the Burma-Bangladesh border by boat from January to November died on their journey.72

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Norwegian King’s visit prompts demolition of homes

In December, Norwegian King Harald V visited Burma.73 On 1 December, he met separately in Naypyidaw with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President Thein Sein, and National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann.74

On 5 December, King Harald traveled to Mandalay.75 Police prevented reporters from private media outlets from standing on a pier to await his arrival, while permitting state-run media to stand there.76 Local authorities also demolished the homes of more than 200 residents living along the Irrawaddy River in advance of his arrival.77 After the visit, King Harald called the evictions “very sad,” and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry sent a letter to regime authorities objecting to the demolitions.78

UNGA adopts Burma resolution

On 29 December, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma.79 It was the 24th resolution adopted on Burma since 1991. The approval followed the adoption of the resolution by UNGA’s Third Committee on 21 November.80 [See November 2014 Burma Bulletin]

ECONOMY

Oil production agreements signed

In December, the regime Energy Ministry signed more production contracts for offshore oil blocks.

- 4 December: In Naypyidaw, the regime Energy Ministry signed an MoU with Burmese companies Ophir Myanmar and Parami Energy for production sharing in offshore oil block AD-3 in the Bay of Bengal.81
- 4 December: In Naypyidaw, the regime Energy Ministry signed an MoU with Burmese company Oil Star Management and Indian companies Oil India, Mercator Petroleum, and Oilmax Energy for production sharing in offshore oil blocks YEB and M-4 in the Andaman Sea.82

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71 UNHCR (05 Dec 14) Irregular Maritime Movements 2014
72 UNHCR (05 Dec 14) Irregular Maritime Movements 2014
73 GNLM (02 Dec 14) President U Thein Sein welcomes Norwegian king with ceremony
74 GNLM (02 Dec 14) President U Thein Sein welcomes Norwegian king with ceremony; GNLM (02 Dec 14) Thura U Shwe Mann meets Norwegian King; DVB (02 Dec 14) King Harald reaffirms Norway’s support for Burmese reform; Mizzima News (02 Dec 14) Norway, Myanmar To Cooperate On Development Programmes
75 GNLM (06 Dec 14) Norwegian King Harald V and Queen visit Mandalay
76 Irrawaddy (05 Dec 14) Mandalay Authorities Hassle Independent Media During Norwegian King’s Arrival
77 Myanmar Times (17 Dec 14) MCDC plans cheap apartments for eviction victims
78 Irrawaddy (05 Dec 14) Mandalay Authorities Hassle Independent Media During Norwegian King’s Arrival; EMG (06 Dec 14) Norway slams Myanmar for crushing squatter huts
79 AFP (30 Dec 14) UN urges Myanmar to grant rights to Muslim Rohingya; AP (29 Dec 14) UN Urges Myanmar to Give Citizenship to Rohingya Muslims; VOA (30 Dec 14) UN Urges Myanmar to Give Rohingya ‘Full Citizenship’
80 AFP (22 Nov 14) UN presses Myanmar over Rohingya rights
81 Energy Voice (05 Dec 14) Ophir Energy strikes contract with Myanmar government; Proactive Investors (05 Dec 14) Ophir Energy seals Myanmar acquisition; GNLM (06 Dec 14) MOGE, oil companies sign production sharing contracts
82 Xinhua (06 Dec 14) Foreign firms sign more oil exploration deals with Myanmar; Business Today (13 Dec 14) Oil India inks deal for 2 offshore oil and gas blocks in Myanmar; GNLM (06 Dec 14) MOGE, oil companies sign production sharing contracts
• **5 December**: In Naypyidaw, the regime Energy Ministry signed an MoU with Burmese companies Berlanga Myanmar and A-1 Mining for production sharing in offshore oil block M-8 in the Andaman Sea.83

**Women's groups call for halt to Tavoy SEZ**

On 24 December, the Tavoyan Women’s Union (TWU) released a report, “Our Lives, Not for Sale,” calling for an immediate stop to the Tavoy (Dawei) Special Economic Zone (SEZ) because of its damaging impact on local communities, especially on the livelihoods of women.84

Based on interviews with 60 women from around the SEZ’s deep-sea port project area, the report found that nearly all women had suffered from income loss, increased food insecurity, and a lack of personal safety due to the project.85 Forty-nine out of the 60 interviewees said they had taken their children out of school since the start of the project, as they could no longer afford the fees.86 Women also had less access to information on the project than men, as most public meetings were exclusively attended by men.87 Men also made decisions on land sales and received any compensation given.88

**OTHER BURMA NEWS IN DECEMBER**

| 1 | The UN Conference on Trade and Development announces that Burma will keep its designation as a Least Developed Country in 2015. |
| 2 | UNFC announces the formation of a federal union army comprised of 12 ethnic armed groups, which issues a statement calling for an immediate end to the military offensive in ethnic areas. |
| 3 | In Geneva, Switzerland, Burma officially ratifies the Biological Weapons Convention. |
| 4 | Arakan State’s Maungdaw Township Court sentences eight Rohingya men to two years in prison each under Article 353 of the Criminal Code for refusing to register as ‘Bengali’ during the 2014 census. |
| 5 | Regime Human Rights Commission releases the findings of its investigation into the death of freelance journalist Aung Kyaw Naing (aka Par Gyi), which found that he was shot by Tatmadaw soldiers but found no evidence of torture, and recommended that the case be heard in a civilian court. |
| 6 | Transparency International releases its Corruption Perceptions Index 2014 and ranks Burma 156th out of the 174 countries examined. |
| 7 | UK risk analyst Maplecroft releases its annual “Human Rights Risk Atlas,” which ranks Burma’s human rights risk as “extreme” due to a failure to adhere to international standards for working conditions. |
| 8 | Around 500 farmers protest in Myittha Township, Mandalay Division, to demand the return of land confiscated by the Tatmadaw in the 1970s. |
| 9 | Karenni Civil Society Network releases its report, “Where is Genuine Peace?”, which says Tatmadaw troops in Karenni State are expanding outposts and that Norwegian NGO Myanmar Peace Support Initiative has resettled IDPs to areas in Shadaw Township, Karenni State under Tatmadaw control. |
| 10 | In a speech at the second Women’s Forum Myanmar held in Naypyidaw, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says Burma has the lowest number of female MPs in ASEAN and urges more women to enter politics. |
| 11 | Over 100 people protest in Rangoon’s Tamwe Township to demand six-party talks, a federal union, a new election commission, and constitutional amendment. |
| 12 | The EU announces that it will allocate 869 billion kyat (US$845 million) over the next six years for rural development, education, governance, rule of law, and peace-building initiatives in Burma. |
| 13 | Around 200 local students and political figures participate in an ABFSU-organized protest in Prome, Pegu Division, against the National Education Law. |
| 14 | Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Myanmar Peasant, Worker, People’s Party. |
| 15 | More than 1,000 workers from the Myanmar York Fashion factory in Rangoon’s Hlaing Tharyar Township stage a protest against unfair wage policies. |
| 16 | In Manila, Philippines, Philippine President Benigno Aquino meets with National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann. |
| 17 | Ma Thandar, wife of murdered freelance journalist Aung Kyaw Naing (aka Par Gyi), sends an open letter to President Thein Sein criticizing the regime Human Rights Commission’s investigation into her death. |

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83 GNLM (07 Dec 14) MOGE, oil companies sign production sharing contract for M-8 Mottama offshore block; Xinhua (07 Dec 14) Singapore-based company to conduct oil-gas exploration in Myanmar
84 DVB (24 Dec 14) Dawei SEZ “destroying local economy, says women’s group; Irrawaddy (24 Dec 14) Women’s Livelihoods Undermined by Dawei SEZ: Report
85 TWU (24 Dec 14) Our Lives, Not For Sale
86 TWU (24 Dec 14) Our Lives, Not For Sale
87 TWU (24 Dec 14) Our Lives, Not For Sale
88 TWU (24 Dec 14) Our Lives, Not For Sale
husband’s death and calling for a new, independent investigation.

In Busan, South Korea, President Thein Sein speaks at the ASEAN-South Korea CEO Summit and meets with South Korean President Park Geun-hye to discuss bilateral economic and political cooperation.

Local authorities extend the 11pm to 4am curfew imposed on Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, imposed after the June 2012 communal riots, for an additional two months.

European Chamber of Commerce opens an office in Burma.

Terrorists in the Bay of Bengal abduct 35 Rohingya fishermen off the coast of Aley Than Kyaw Village, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.

NLD concludes its two-day central committee meeting in Rangoon, where 112 delegates from state and division NLD branches discussed preparations for the 2015 general election.

At the end of a three-day Women’s Participation Seminar in Loikaw Township, Karenni State, Karenni women’s organizations issue an open letter calling on the regime to stop all large-scale development projects in Karenni State until political dialogue takes place and ethnic conflict is resolved.

More than 400 local residents protest against a proposed coal fire power project in Aunden Village, Ye Township, Mon State.

Regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye meets with political party representatives in Rangoon to discuss preparations for the 2015 general election.

Authorities in Prome Township, Pegu Division, demolish 21 squatter homes along the Irrawaddy River to make way for tourism infrastructure.

In Naypyidaw, Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao meets separately with President Thein Sein and Vice-President Nyan Tun.

Thirty-six Karen organizations issue a press release calling for an international commission of inquiry to investigate possible war crimes perpetrated by the Tatmadaw in eastern Burma.

Asia Foundation releases its report, “Myanmar 2014: Civic Knowledge and Values in a Changing Society,” a survey that revealed optimism about Burma’s potential for a successful democratic transition, but demonstrated limited public knowledge of the structure or processes of government.

ADB announces that it has approved a 103 billion kyat loan (US$100 million) for Burmese company Yoma Strategic Holdings to improve infrastructure and support economic growth in Burma.

Supreme Court releases a report describing a three-year plan to reform Burma’s judicial system.

In Naypyidaw, Thai Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Udomdej Sitabutr meets separately with Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing and Tatmadaw Deputy Commander-in-Chief Vice-Sr Gen Soe Win.

ADB announces that Burma has become the 11th shareholder of the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, which will allow it to access a joint funding pool for infrastructure projects.

At a joint press conference in Rangoon, AAPP, Equality Myanmar, and Burma Partnership criticize the permanent residency program, which the regime unveiled on 5 December, for its prohibition of political activities by permanent residents.

President Thein Sein attends the 5th Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Bangkok, Thailand.

Tens of thousands of protesters demonstrate in Mandalay against local authorities’ proposal to relocate the city’s gems market.

Five members of the ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team meet with the regime peacemaking team in Rangoon, resuming dialogue since the last round of formal peace talks in September.

Around 400 Danu people rally in Pindaya, Shan State, demanding peace and ethnic inclusion in Burma.

Around 2,000 Pa-O people from Hsihseng and Hopong Townships, Shan State, rally in Taunggyi, Shan State, calling for peace and ethnic inclusion.

In an interview with the BBC, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi warns against over-optimism about Burma’s transition and calls on the international community to encourage the regime to engage in political negotiations.

Rangoon residents vote for the first time since 1949 to elect 115 members of the Rangoon City Development Committee.

Candidates and other residents protest outside Rangoon City Hall to denounce unfair conduct during the 27 December Rangoon City Development Committee election.

Around 11,000 people protest in Nawnghkio Township, Shan State, to demand peace, development, and six-party talks.

At a press conference in Rangoon, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that the NLD has not yet decided if it will participate in the 2015 general election because it is not clear if the conditions will be free and fair and that 2014 did not bring improvements in the lives of the majority of people in Burma.
REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN DECEMBER

“We are not afraid”, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) http://bit.ly/1AaN9xN


