Police injure about 100 protesters and arrest 127 others in a crackdown on student demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division, prompting condemnation from the international community and rights groups.

Police and hired thugs attack education activists, workers, and journalists covering protests in Rangoon. The EU faces criticism for providing crowd control training to police in Burma.

The Tatmadaw’s offensive against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Kokang Self-Administered Zone escalates and spills over into China, killing five Chinese farmers.

As Tatmadaw attacks continue in Kachin and northern Shan States, and fresh clashes break out in Karen and Arakan States, the regime and ethnic armed groups conclude drafting the nationwide ceasefire agreement during a seventh round of formal peace talks in Rangoon.

The People’s Assembly approves the Interfaith Marriage Bill and the Population Control Bill, which restrict religious, marital, and reproductive rights.

The UN Human Rights Council adopts by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma and extends the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur for another year.

Extremist Buddhist monk U Wirathu threatens UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee, inciting people to “find ways to teach the beastly woman a lesson.”

A court in Arakan State re-sentences four Rohingya men to prison terms of five to eight years over an April 2013 protest against attempts by regime immigration officials to register Rohingya IDPs as ‘Bengali.’

The regime sentences a bar owner and two managers to two and a half years in prison for ‘insulting’ religion and disobeying a civil servant, and sentences two journalists to two months in prison on charges of defaming a military-appointed MP.

KEY STORY

In March, police in Letpadan, Pegu Division, violently cracked down on students protesting against the National Education Law, while supporters around the country also faced arrests and violence. The
international community, including the UN, United States, EU, UK, and France, expressed concern over the crackdowns.¹

**Police crack down on student protesters in Letpadan**

On 2 March, police in Letpadan, Pegu Division, surrounded hundreds of student demonstrators at a monastery.² The move came after the students announced that they would resume their march against the National Education Law, which began in Mandalay on 20 January, following the regime’s failure to amend the law by 28 February.³ [See February 2015 Burma Bulletin] Around 200 police officers put up barricades preventing the students from continuing to Rangoon.⁴ The standoff prompted solidarity protests around Burma. [See below, *Student solidarity protests face violence, intimidation*]

On 6 March, as the standoff continued, police arrested five students who had broken off from the main group to protest downtown, before releasing them the following day.⁵

On 10 March, more than one week after the standoff began, authorities said they would permit the students to continue their march to Rangoon, provided they did not wave banners or chant slogans on the way.⁶ When students attempted to proceed through the barricades, the police responded with force.⁷ They beat students, monks, supporters, and journalists with batons, injuring an estimated 100 people.⁸ Police also attacked medical workers carrying the injured into ambulances.⁹ Authorities arrested 127 people on the scene, including 20 women and an estimated 65 students.¹⁰

More than 130 rights groups condemned the crackdown.¹¹ On 11 March, the National League for Democracy (NLD) called for an investigation into the incident.¹²

On 25 March, Letpadan Township Court, charged 69 of the arrested under Articles 143, 145, 147, 332, and 505(b) of the Criminal Code, and 11 under Articles 143, 145, and 332, but released the 11 on bail.¹³

**Student solidarity protests face violence, intimidation**

Beginning on 3 March, students and supporters around the country demonstrated in solidarity with the students blockaded in Letpadan, Pegu Division.¹⁴

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² AP (03 Mar 15) Student marchers’ route; AFP (03 Mar 15) Police lock Myanmar students in temple
³ AP (02 Mar 15) Student marchers’ route; AFP (03 Mar 15) Police lock Myanmar students in temple
⁴ Reuters (06 Mar 15) Police arrest 5 student protesters; U.S. expresses concern; DVB (06 Mar 15) VDO: Students arrested in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan
⁵ Reuters (06 Mar 15) Police arrest 5 student protesters; U.S. expresses concern; DVB (06 Mar 15) VDO: Students arrested in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan
⁶ Reuters (06 Mar 15) Police arrest 5 student protesters; U.S. expresses concern; DVB (06 Mar 15) VDO: Students arrested in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan
⁷ Reuters (06 Mar 15) Police arrest 5 student protesters; U.S. expresses concern; DVB (06 Mar 15) VDO: Students arrested in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan; EMG (10 Mar 15) Student protest column blocked in Letpadan
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At a solidarity protest in Rangoon on 5 March, over 100 police and hired thugs used force to disperse about 200 demonstrators near Sule Pagoda, beating them with batons and dragging them into trucks. During the protest, police detained five students and three 88 Generation Peace and Open Society members and held them overnight.

Protesters denounced the use of police violence at subsequent demonstrations around the country. [See box, Protests against police violence]

On 10 March, President Thein Sein ordered the formation of a commission of inquiry into the 5 March crackdown. On 31 March, the commission submitted its report to the President but did not release the findings publicly.

On 12 March, police in Rangoon’s Ahlone Township detained four students and an AFP reporter who was sheltering the students during a nighttime raid. Police released the reporter and one of the students the following day.

On 27 March, All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) members and other activists staged protests in 11 cities in Irrawaddy, Magwe, Mandalay, Pegu, Rangoon, Sagaing, and Tenasserim Divisions, to call for the release of those detained during the 10 March crackdown on student protesters in Letpadan, Pegu Division. During the protests, police in Rangoon arrested three students, including ABFSU activist Nanda Sitt Aung, while police in Myingyan, Mandalay Division, arrested five students.

Parliament considers National Education Law amendments

From 5 to 17 March, the National Assembly’s Bill Committee held hearings on amendments to the National Education Law. After boycotting earlier sessions, representatives from the student-led Action Committee for Democratic Education (ACDE) and the National Network for Education Reform

Protests against police violence

- 6 March: Around 20 students protested in Mandalay to denounce the 5 March crackdown on demonstrators in Rangoon.
- 6 March: More than 150 people protested near Rangoon University against the 5 March crackdown on demonstrators in Rangoon.
- 8 March: Thugs attacked around 20 protesters in Rangoon’s Hmawby Township who demanded that police stop using violence against demonstrators.
- 10 March: Police in Rangoon’s Kamayut Township violently dispersed a crowd of around 60 protesters denouncing the crackdown on demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division.
- 11 March: Students and teachers at Mandalay’s Yadanabon University protested to condemn the 10 March police crackdown on demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division.
- 12 March: Hundreds of activists gathered in Rangoon’s North Dagon Township for a vigil to condemn the 10 March police crackdown on demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division.
(NNER) attended hearings on 16 and 17 March.\textsuperscript{30} They called for amendments to the law in line with a February agreement between students, the NNER, and regime officials [See February 2014 Burma Bulletin], and for the release of detained student demonstrators.\textsuperscript{31} The All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) boycotted to protest the arrest of its members in Letpadan, Pegu Division.\textsuperscript{32}

On 26 March, the National Assembly approved a bill amending to the National Education Law.\textsuperscript{33} The bill failed to adhere to several student demands, including the free formation of student unions and a commitment to devote 20\% of the national budget to education.\textsuperscript{34}

**Police attack striking factory workers demanding higher pay**

In March, about 100 workers from Korean-owned COSTEC and Hong Kong-owned Ford Glory garment factories in Rangoon’s Shwepyithar Industrial Zone remained on strike for pay raises and better working conditions, after the majority of striking workers had returned to factories in late February.\textsuperscript{35} [See February 2015 Burma Bulletin]

On 4 March, the workers began a protest march from their factories to Rangoon City Hall. Along the way, around 300 police and hired thugs in Rangoon’s Insein Township attacked them, injuring several of the workers.\textsuperscript{36} Police detained 13 workers, including six women, and charged them under Article 147 of the Criminal Code and Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law.\textsuperscript{37} Police also arrested labor activist Thu Zaw Kyi Win for his involvement in the protest and charged him for incitement under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code.\textsuperscript{38}

**Regime targets journalists covering protests**

In March, police and hired thugs attacked and intimidated journalists covering protests around Burma.

- **4 March:** Police in Rangoon’s Insein Township detained two photojournalists, Myo Zaw Lin from DVB and Nikki from 7 Day Daily, and held them for several hours. The two were covering a garment factory worker protest.\textsuperscript{39}
- **10 March:** During their crackdown on student demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division, police beat journalists, injuring two.\textsuperscript{40} Police also arrested Myanmar Post journalist Nyan Lin Tun and Reporter Journalist Phyoo Aung Myint during the crackdown and held them for three days.\textsuperscript{41}
- **10 March:** Three men attacked Popular Journal reporter Aung Zaw Htoo at a house in Rangoon’s Hlaing Tharyar Township. Aung Zaw Htoo had agreed to conduct an interview there with one of the men, who claimed to be one of the attackers in the 5 March crackdown near Sule Pagoda.\textsuperscript{42} The three

\textsuperscript{30} Irrawaddy (05 Mar 15) Students Absent as Parliament Takes Up Education Law; DVB (05 Mar 15) Students boycott parliament briefing; GNLM (18 Mar 15) Amyotha Hluttaw hears NNER input on education amendment bill; Irrawaddy (17 Mar 15) Students, NGO Experts Outline Education Reform Demands at Upper House
\textsuperscript{31} GNLM (18 Mar 15) Amyotha Hluttaw hears NNER input on education amendment bill; Irrawaddy (17 Mar 15) Students, NGO Experts Outline Education Reform Demands at Upper House; Irrawaddy (18 Mar 15) Education Law Hearings Conclude in Nappyidaw; Myanmar Times (19 Mar 15) NNER meets hluttaw over education law changes
\textsuperscript{32} DVB (12 Mar 15) Student groups: Who will attend Nat Edu parliament briefing?; Myanmar Times (13 Mar 15) Activists and celebrities gather to denounce police crackdown; DVB (17 Mar 15) Students: Authorities are breaking agreement; Irrawaddy (17 Mar 15) Students, NGO Experts Outline Education Reform Demands at Upper House
\textsuperscript{33} GNLM (27 Mar 15) Amyotha Hluttaw approves bill amending national education law
\textsuperscript{34} DVB (27 Mar 15) Upper house passes watered-down education bill; Irrawaddy (28 Mar 15) Upper House Approves Education Law Amendments; AFP (27 Mar 15) Myanmar upper house approves student unions
\textsuperscript{35} Irrawaddy (04 Mar 15) Police Arrest Protest Garment Workers
\textsuperscript{36} AP (05 Mar 15) Myanmar police drag away protesting factory workers; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 15) Police Arrest Protest Garment Workers; Myanmar Times (05 Mar 15) Blocked workers stage sit-in protest; Myanmar Times (09 Mar 15) Workers issue threat to govt over arrests; Xinhua (05 Mar 15) Mmmn authorities disperse striking industrial zone workers.
\textsuperscript{37} AHRC (11 Mar 15) BURMA/MYANMAR: Attack gangs and falsification again the orders of the day; AFP (06 Mar 15) Myanmar police charge 14 garment workers as protests gather pace; AP (05 Mar 15) Myanmar Police Drag Away Protest Factory Workers; GNLM (06 Mar 15) 14 striking workers face riot charges following arrest; DVB (05 Mar 15) Workers; journalists detained in Shwepyithar protest
\textsuperscript{38} Myanmar Times (19 Mar 15) Judge closes courts for labour activist hearings
\textsuperscript{39} DVB (05 Mar 15) Workers, journalists detained in Shwepyithar protest; Irrawaddy (05 Mar 15) 14 Garment Workers Charged with Rioting; AP (05 Mar 15) Myanmar Police Drag Away Protest Factory Workers
\textsuperscript{40} DPA (10 Mar 15) More than 100 arrested after Myanmar police beat student protesters; RFA (10 Mar 15) Myanmar Police Beat Education Law Protesters, Arrest More Than 100
\textsuperscript{41} DVB (13 Mar 15) Two journalists released from Tharawaddy prison
\textsuperscript{42} Irrawaddy (16 Mar 15) Journalist Detained, Beaten by Red Armband Thugs: Report
men beat him, confiscated his voice recorder, and changed the password on his mobile phone before releasing him later in the evening.43

The interim Myanmar Press Council and press freedom organizations, including the Myanmar Journalists Network (MJN) and PEN International, condemned the police’s treatment of journalists during the 10 March crackdown in Letpadan, Pegu Division.44

EU under fire for police training

Amid the violent crackdowns on demonstrators in March, the EU faced criticism for its provision of crowd control training to police in Burma, which began in 2013.45 On 7 March, activists protested outside the EU office in Rangoon’s Kamayut Township.46 On 11 March, Burma Campaign UK (BCUK) called on the EU to review its training program.47 In its 10 March statement expressing concern over events in Letpadan, Pegu Division, the EU defended its program, saying the crackdown demonstrated the need for further police reform.48

INSIDE BURMA

Tatmadaw continues air and land offensive in Kokang Self-Administered Zone

Throughout the month, Tatmadaw troops continued their offensive against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, which began in February. [See February 2015 Burma Bulletin] Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces in Laogai Township on at least 13 occasions from 1 to 19 March.49 Tatmadaw air force personnel also used fighter jets and helicopters to launch air strikes on MNDA positions from 5 to 19 March.50

Tatmadaw troops also targeted civilians in Kokang Self-Administered Zone:

• 8 March: Tatmadaw troops broke into the home of an 80-year-old woman in Laogai Township and stabbed and beat her when she tried to escape.51
• 10 March: A mortar shell hit Laogai killing two children and injuring 11 others.52

Ceasefire agreement drafted as fighting continues in four states

From 17 to 22 March, the seventh round of official nationwide ceasefire negotiations between the regime peacemaking team and ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team took place in Rangoon.53 On 30
March, the two sides met again and completed the text of a draft nationwide ceasefire agreement, concluding 16 months of negotiations. The agreement is to be signed by both sides and sent to Parliament after the ethnic armed groups’ leaders have met.

Throughout March, fighting between Tatmadaw troops and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) continued in Kachin and northern Shan States. [See box, Clashes in Kachin and northern Shan States]

In addition, Tatmadaw troops clashed with Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) forces on 11 March near Kawkareik Township, Karen State, following clashes with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) at the end of February. Tatmadaw troops also clashed twice with Arakan Army forces on 29 March in Kyauktaw Township, Arakan State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clashes in Kachin and northern Shan States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA Battalion 223 forces in Kutkai Township, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>8 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 140 attacked a KIA post in Waingmaw Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>8 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA Battalion 571 forces in Kutkai, and Manton Townships, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>9 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 99 clashed with TNLA forces in Kukthai Township, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>9 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 88 clashed with TNLA Battalion 478 and KIA Battalion 8 combined forces in Kawng Kat Village, Namkham Township, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>9 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 252 fired mortar shells at KIA Battalion 23 forces near the KIA headquarters in Laiza, Momawk Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>10 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 222 attacked a KIA post in Waingmaw Township, Kachin State, killing one KIA soldier.</td>
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<td><strong>10 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 225 attacked a KIA post in Hpakan Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 140 attacked a KIA post in Waingmaw Township, Kachin State, killing one KIA soldier.</td>
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<td><strong>11 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from IB 255 destroyed a KIA post in Waingmaw Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>12 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 385 and 386 clashed with KIA forces in Mogaung Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>14 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 88 clashed with TNLA forces in Manton Township, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>19 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 77 clashed with KIA Battalion 36 forces in Muse Township, Shan State.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>20 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA Battalion 571 forces in Muse Township, Shan State.</td>
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<td><strong>21 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 317 attacked a KIA post in Mansi Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 10 and 317 used fighter jets to launch three rounds of air strikes on KIA Battalion 27 forces in Mansi Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>24 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 236 clashed with KIA Battalion 12 forces in Mung Ding Pa Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State.</td>
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<td><strong>24 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 123 clashed with KIA Battalion 9 forces in Kukthai Township, Shan State.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24 March</strong>: Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA Battalion 256 forces in Kyaukme Township, TNLA Battalion 112 forces in Namkham Township, and TNLA Battalion 527 forces in Mongmit Township, Shan State.</td>
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</tbody>
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53 GNLM (18 Mar 15) Peace talks on nationwide ceasefire agreement resume; IMNA (18 Mar 15) Halted nationwide ceasefire talks resumed; DVB (18 Mar 15) Peace talks revived in Rangoon
54 GNLM (31 Mar 15) National ceasefire talks end with agreement on draft accord; Xinhua (30 Mar 15) Draft nationwide ceasefire agreement finalized in Myanmar; AFP (30 Mar 15) Myanmar, rebels agree landmark draft peace deal
55 Xinhua (30 Mar 15) Draft nationwide ceasefire agreement finalized in Myanmar; AFP (30 Mar 15) Myanmar, rebels agree landmark draft peace deal; Xinhua (30 Mar 15) Revolutionary Army of the Karen Nationalities (KIA) and Tatmadaw agree landmark draft peace deal; AP (30 Mar 15) Myanmar, rebels agree to sign landmark ceasefire
56 KIC (12 Mar 15) DKBA and Burma Army Fighting Forces Kawkareik Traffic to a Standstill; KIC (03 Mar 15) Fighting Between Burma Army and Karen Continues To Spread Statewide
57 Irrawaddy (30 Mar 15) Fighting Reported Between Govt and Arakan Army; Mizzima News (30 Mar 15) Arakan Army claims capture of Tatmadaw captain in fighting; Xinhua (30 Mar 15) Heavy fighting between Myanmar govt forces, ethnic army occurs near border with Bangladesh; Narinjara News (31 Mar 15) Arakan Army and Burma Army clash in Arakan State
58 Kachinland News (05 Mar 15) Over 130 Encounters between KIA and Burmese Army Troops in Two Months
59 Kachinland News (11 Mar 15) Burmese Army Attacks Precede Scheduled Peace Talks
60 Kachinland News (09 Mar 15) Battles Rage in Tamonye and Manton Township
61 FBR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burma Army Airstrike Across China Border
62 FBR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burma Army Airstrike Across China Border
63 Kachinland News (11 Mar 15) Burmese Army Attacks Precede Scheduled Peace Talks
64 Kachinland News (11 Mar 15) Burmese Army Attacks Precede Scheduled Peace Talks
65 Myawady (12 Mar 15) Tatmadaw arrests three Kokang insurgents, seizes arms and ammunition, narcotic drugs
66 FBR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burma Army Airstrike Across China Border
67 FBR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burma Army Airstrike Across China Border
68 FBR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burma Army Airstrike Across China Border
69 Kachinland News (21 Mar 15) Battles Rage as NCCT Meets UPWC in Yangon
70 Kachinland News (21 Mar 15) Battles Rage as NCCT Meets UPWC in Yangon
71 Kachinland News (21 Mar 15) Battles Rage as NCCT Meets UPWC in Yangon
Parliament’s 12th session continues

In March, Parliament continued its 12th session. Important developments included:

- **11 March**: The National Parliament approved a 246 million yuan (US$39.8 million) loan from China’s Exim Bank to provide the police force with new vehicles and equipment.77
- **18 March**: The regime Information Ministry withdrew its proposed Public Service Media Bill from debate in the National Parliament following criticism from journalists that classifying state-run outlets as public service media would provide them with an unfair advantage over private outlets.18
- **19 March**: The People’s Assembly approved two ‘National Race and Religion Protection’ package bills: the Interfaith Marriage Bill, which would require Buddhist women and men of other faiths who wish to marry to apply for permission from local authorities; and the Population Control Bill, which would allow the regime to designate areas, based on socio-economic indicators, in which women would have to wait 36 months between pregnancies.79
- **26 March**: The National Assembly approved a bill amending the National Education Law following weeks of debate and hearings, which began on 5 March.80 [See above, Parliament considers National Education Law amendments]

Budget prioritizes military spending

On 31 March, the National Parliament approved the national budget for the 2015-16 fiscal year.81 Total expenditures amounted to 20.6 trillion kyat (US$20 billion) with a deficit of 3 trillion kyat (US$2.92 billion). Military spending represented 13.35% of the total (higher than the 11.84% originally proposed in January), while education and healthcare represented 6.80% and 3.67% respectively.82 While most regime ministries trimmed their original proposed budgets at the request of Parliament, the regime Defense and Home Affairs Ministries retained their full requested budget allocations.83

The budget also increased salaries for civil servants and military officers. It stipulated that beginning April 1, the lowest-paid civil servants’ salaries would rise from K75,000 (US$75) to K120,000 (US$120), while the highest-paid civil servants’ salaries would rise from K250,000 (US$250) to K500,000 (US$500).84 Salaries for the highest ranking military officers would more than double.85

HUMAN RIGHTS

UN: Burma sliding “towards extreme nationalism, religious hatred, and conflict”

On 16 March, in her periodic report to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee said that the regime continued to show “signs of backtracking.”86 The report included the following key issues of concern:87

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72 Kachinland News (21 Mar 15) Burmese Army's 88th LID Troops Attack KIA Post
74 Kachinland News (26 Mar 15) Burmese Army Continues Bombing Raids in Kachin
75 Kachinland News (26 Mar 15) Burmese Army Continues Bombing Raids in Kachin
78 GNLM (19 Mar 15) Information Ministry withdraws proposed Public Service Media bill; DVB (18 Mar 15) Mol withdraws Public Service Media Bill; Irrawaddy (18 Mar 15) Public Service Media Bill Shelved by Parliament; EMG (19 Mar 15) Information Ministry withdraws PSM bill from parliament
79 DVB (20 Mar 15) Controversial marriage, population bills approved by lower house; Irrawaddy (20 Mar 15) Lower House Approves Two ‘Race and Religion’ Bills
80 GNLM (27 Mar 15) Amyotha Hluttaw approves bill amending national education law
81 GNLM (01 Apr 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves Union Budgets bill
82 Myanmar Times (02 Apr 15) U Thein Sein govt’s last budget approved
83 Irrawaddy (01 Apr 15) Parliament Approves US$19b Annual Budget
84 GNLM (27 Mar 15) Government announces pay raises for civil workers; DVB (27 Mar 15) Salary increases confirmed for civil servants, gvt heads; AP (26 Mar 15) Myanmar increases civil servant pay to raise living standards
85 Myanmar Times (27 Mar 15) Government reveals detail on planned pay rises
86 OHCHR (16 Mar 15) Statement by Ms Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, 28th session of the Human Rights Council, Item 4
• Restrictions on democratic space, media laws, which place restrictions on freedom of expression, and the lack of public consultation in the Broadcasting Bill drafting process.
• The need for constitutional reform to address the military’s role in politics.
• Curtailment of political rights of temporary ID card holders.
• Endemic discrimination against Rohingya in Arakan State.
• Detention of political prisoners, including farmers.
• Ongoing arrest and detention of peaceful protesters and the excessive use of force by police to manage protests.
• Continued intimidation and imprisonment of journalists and human rights defenders.
• Renewed fighting, attacks on humanitarian envoys, and tens of thousands displaced in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.
• Ongoing land confiscation and forced evictions across the country.
• Failure to hold authorities accountable for serious violations of international human rights law.
• The progression through Parliament of four draft laws on race and religion, which are inconsistent with international human rights law and could fuel interreligious tensions.

Following the delivery of her report to the UNHRC, extremist Buddhist monk U Wirathu threatened the UN Special Rapporteur on his Facebook page, inciting people to “find ways to teach the beastly woman a lesson.” In response, on 20 March, the UN Coordination Committee of Special Procedures issued a press release condemning hate speech directed against the UN Special Rapporteur and urging the regime to take necessary measures to address and prosecute acts of incitement to violence.

**UNHRC adopts Burma resolution**

On 27 March, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma. The resolution expressed concern over the following issues:

- The increase in nationalist-based intolerance of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as of the UN and other international organizations.
- The situation of Rohingya and other minorities in Arakan State, including further instances of violence and abuse; reports of attacks against Muslim minorities in other parts of Burma; and the intimidation of the UN and other humanitarian workers in Arakan State.
- The regime’s declaration that all temporary ID cards would expire on 31 March 2015, which denies Rohingya any form of identification and the right to vote.
- Further delays in opening a country office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The resolution encouraged the regime to undertake “full, transparent, and independent” investigations into all reports of human rights violations and to ensure accountability. It urged the regime to release all remaining political prisoners, including those recently detained or convicted. The resolution also extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma for another year.

**Regime continues arbitrarily arrests, imprisonments**

In March, the regime continued to arbitrarily arrest and imprison activists, media professionals, and business owners.

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88 Reuters (18 Mar 15) Threatened U.N. rights envoy confident Myanmar will protect her
89 UNHRC (20 Mar 15) Statement by the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures on the repeated hate speech and incitement to violence directed against the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar; Mizzima News (23 Mar 15) Hate speech against UN rapporteur ‘deplored’
90 OHCHR (27 Mar 15) Human Rights Council adopts ten texts, extends mandates on Syria, Iran, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Myanmar
91 HRC, 28th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/28/L.21/Rev.1
92 HRC, 28th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/28/L.21/Rev.1
93 HRC, 28th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/28/L.21/Rev.1
94 HRC, 28th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/28/L.21/Rev.1
• 11 March: Authorities in Monywa, Sagaing Division, arrested Action Committee for Democratic Education (ACDE) student leader Soe Hlaing for taking down the national flag and hoisting the student union’s flag at a college in Monywa during a student protest in February. 95

• 17 March: A court in Rangoon’s Bahan Township sentenced V Gastro Bar owner Tun Thurein and two managers, Hlut Ko Ko Lwin and Philip Blackwood, to two and a half years in prison with hard labor under Articles 295(a) and 188 of the Criminal Code for ‘insulting’ religion and disobeying an order from a public servant. The charges were related to a December 2014 Facebook post of an image of the Buddha wearing headphones. 96 [See December 2014 Burma Bulletin]

• 18 March: Moulmein Township Court, Mon State, sentenced two Myanmar Post journalists to two months in prison each under Article 500 of the Criminal Code on charges of defaming a military-appointed MP in a story published on 29 January 2014. 97

• 20 March: Police in Mandalay arrested two student activists for writing graffiti on a wall calling President Thein Sein and regime Home Affairs Minister Lt Gen Ko Ko “terrorists” and demanded the release of students arrested during protests in Rangoon and Letpadan, Pegu Division, on 5 and 10 March respectively. Authorities released the two the following morning. 98

• 23 March: A court in Chan Aye Thazan Township, Mandalay Division, sentenced Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF) members Thein Aung Myint and Saw Hla Aung to six months in prison under Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law for leading a peaceful protest against electricity price hikes on 27 March 2014. The court also sentenced Kyaw Myo Htun and Khet Khet Tin to six months in prison on the same charges in connection with the 27 March protests, despite not having participated. 99

Rohingya community leaders re-sentenced for 2013 protest in Arakan State

On 3 March, Arakan State Divisional Court in Akyab [Sittwe] re-sentenced four Rohingya men to prison terms for their involvement in an April 2013 protest against attempts by regime immigration officials to register Rohingya IDPs as ‘Bengali.’ 100

The court sentenced Ba Thar, Kyaw Myint, and his son Hla Myint to eight years in prison under Articles 147, 333, and 395 of the Criminal Code. It also sentenced Kyaw Khin to five years in prison under Articles 147 and 333 of the Criminal Code. Ba Thar had previously been acquitted of all charges, while Kyaw Myint and Hla Myint had already been sentenced and then released in the October 2014 presidential amnesty. Kyaw Khin had already been released after serving out his sentence. All four men were re-prosecuted after the Arakan State Law Officer appealed the original verdicts. 101

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya flee to Bangladesh

In March, Rohingya attempting to flee to Bangladesh continued to face arrests and push backs.

• 6 March: Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel clashed with a group of at least 300 Rohingya who had crossed into Bangladesh near Cox’s Bazar. Bangladeshi authorities detained and deported 136 of them, while the others escaped. 102

• 9 March: BGB personnel arrested 14 Rohingya attempting to enter Bangladesh through Cox’s Bazar and imprisoned them the following day. 103

• 10 March: BGB personnel arrested nine Rohingya in Cox’s Bazar and pushed them back into Burma. 104

95 Irrawaddy (13 Mar 15) Police Arrest 5 Students in Rangoon, Monywa in Wake of Crackdown
96 DVB (17 Mar 15) Buddha Bar trio sentenced to 2.5 years with hard labour; Irrawaddy (17 Mar 15) V Gastro Bar Trio Sentenced to 2.5 Years, Hard Labor
97 Irrawaddy (18 Mar 15) Journalists Handed 2-Month Prison Sentence on Defamation Charge
98 DVB (21 Mar 15) Graffiti protestors arrested in Mandalay
99 FIDH (23 Mar 15) Myanmar : Arbitrary detention and sentencing of Messrs Thein Aung Myint and Saw Hla Aung
100 Al (27 Mar 15) Rohingya Community Leaders Imprisoned
101 Al (27 Mar 15) Rohingya Community Leaders Imprisoned
102 Reuters (06 Mar 15) Bangladesh border guards clash with Muslim migrants from Myanmar
103 Kaladan News (11 Mar 15) 14 Rohingyas sent to jail in Bangladesh
104 Kaladan News (11 Mar 15) 14 Rohingyas sent to jail in Bangladesh
Burmese migrants subjected to slavery

On 25 March, an AP investigative report found that Thai fishing companies used Burmese slave labor. Fishing boat captains forced trafficking victims to work 22-hour shifts, beat and tortured them, and denied them clean water. Brokers kept the victims locked in cages in Benjina, Maluku Province, Indonesia, and sold them to the boat captains for about US$1,000 each.105

In addition, Burmese migrants faced troubles throughout the ASEAN region.

- **18 March**: Thai police and military officials raided the homes of 1,000 migrant workers and arrested 100 workers from Burma and Cambodia, charging them with illegal entry in Chonburi Province, Thailand.106
- **22 March**: Thai authorities arrested ten Burmese migrants and charged them with illegal entry after stopping them at a checkpoint in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand.107
- **25 March**: Malaysian authorities handed over 102 Burmese migrant workers arrested for illegal entry or visa overstay to regime authorities.108 Many of the workers reported being tortured and chained at detention centers in Kuala Lumpur.109
- **30 March**: Thai police arrested and deported 76 Burmese migrants, including six Rohingya, on a train heading south from Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Thailand.110

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

China angered by spillover of Tatmadaw air strikes

In March, Tatmadaw air strikes in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, spilled over into China’s Yunnan Province on four separate occasions, sparking Chinese condemnation.

- **8 March**: A Tatmadaw fighter jet dropped four bombs in Mengding Township.111
- **11 March**: Tatmadaw troops launched air strikes on Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) forces near the China-Burma border in Laogai Township. Four bombs landed on the Chinese side.112
- **13 March**: Several Tatmadaw aircraft bombed a sugarcane field in Lincang, killing five farmers and injuring eight others.113
- **20 March**: Tatmadaw aircraft dropped bombs on Mengdui Township, with several landing in refugee camps.114

Following the attacks, on 14 March, the Chinese Defense Ministry warned the regime that it must apologize for the 13 March bombing, punish those responsible, and compensate victims’ families.115

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105 AP (25 Mar 15) AP Investigation: Are slaves catching the fish you buy?
106 Bangkok Post (18 Mar 15) 100 illegal migrants busted in Chon Buri
107 Bangkok Post (22 Mar 15) Myanmar migrants nabbed in Kanchanaburi
108 GNLM (26 Mar 15) Malaysia repatriates dozens of Myanmar illegal migrants; DVB (22 Mar 15) Burmese navy to help repatriate 100 jailed migrants from Malaysia; Xinhua (26 Mar 15) Myanmar warship carrying back illegal immigrants from Malaysia; EMG (26 Mar 15) Navy ship to bring workers home from Malaysia
109 Myanmar Times (30 Mar 15) Returning migrants tell of abuse and torture; Myanmar Times (27 Mar 15) Warship to bring home detained migrants; GNLM (30 Mar 15) Naval vessel Maha Thiha Thura carries back 102 Myanmar migrant workers from Malaysia
110 Reuters (30 Mar 15) Thailand detains 76 migrants found on train, including Rohingya; AFP (30 Mar 15) Dozens of Myanmar migrants arrested on train to Thai south; Bangkok Post (30 Mar 15) 76 illegal Burmese migrants arrested en route to Malaysia
112 Xinhua (11 Mar 15) Myanmar govt continues to airstrikes Kokang ethnic army; Kachinland News (14 Mar 15) Four Shells Fall in Chinese Soil on Wednesday; FBRR (19 Mar 15) Four Chinese Civilians Die In Burmese Army Airstrike Across China Border
113 Xinhua (14 Mar 15) Chinese fighter jets patrol China-Myanmar border after bombing; RFA (14 Mar 15) Myanmar cross-border bombing kills 4, draws protest from China; AFP (14 Mar 15) Myanmar warplane kills four in Yunnan
114 RFA (21 Mar 15) Fresh Cross-Border Bombs Reported in China-Myanmar Border War
115 Reuters (15 Mar 15) China threatens ‘decisive’ response after Myanmar bombing; Xinhua (14 Mar 15) Yangon should be responsible for maintaining China-Myanmar border security
ECONOMY

Economic governance and land issues constrain businesses

Two reports released on 24 March outlined constraints on businesses in Burma.

- The World Bank Group’s “Myanmar Investment Climate Assessment” report found that private businesses in Burma were constrained by lack of access to finance, difficulties in getting land use rights, power outages, and inadequate workforce skills.\(^{116}\)
- The Asian Development Bank’s (ADB) “Myanmar: Cross-Cutting Governance Challenges” highlighted economic governance deficiencies, particularly the legal system and the business regulatory framework; problems in the land market due to the military’s prominence in land confiscation; and the pervasive militarization of the bureaucracy.\(^{117}\)

Regime signs more production sharing contracts, grants permits

In March, state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) under the regime Energy Ministry signed more production contracts with foreign energy firms.

- **20 March**: MOGE signed production sharing contracts with UK company BG Group and its partner, Australian company Woodside Energy, for shallow water blocks A4 and A7 and deepwater blocks AD2 and AD5 in the Bay of Bengal.\(^{118}\)
- **24 March**: MOGE signed a production sharing contract with Unocal, a subsidiary of US company Chevron, for offshore block A5 in the Bay of Bengal.\(^{119}\)
- **31 March**: MOGE signed production sharing contracts with Indian company Reliance Industries for shallow water blocks M17 and M18 in the Andaman Sea.\(^{120}\)
- **31 March**: MOGE signed production sharing contracts with Italian company Eni and PetroVietnam jointly for deepwater block MD2 in the Bay of Bengal and deepwater block MD4 in the Andaman Sea.\(^{121}\)

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MARCH

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In his monthly radio address, President Thein Sein says that the 2015 general election will take place in November.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>In Naypyidaw, President Thein Sein meets with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss constitutional amendments and the 2015 general election.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>WHO and UNICEF call for the resumption of immunization activities in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, where 11 villages have yet to be covered by the national immunization program, which was interrupted by the recent outbreak of fighting in the area.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Amnesty International and ICJ issue a joint statement calling on Parliament to reject or extensively revise the four bills of the ‘National Race and Religion Protection’ package, which would entrench widespread discrimination and risk fueling further violence against religious minorities.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Regime Deputy FM Thant Kyaw delivers a statement on Burma’s human rights situation at the 28th UNHRC.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>UNFPA says of 4,000 women who visited its six women’s support centers in Arakan State, 80% were victims of gender-based violence.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Amnesty International issues a statement condemning the crackdown on peaceful student protesters in Letpadan Township, Pegu Division, calling for an end to unnecessary and excessive use of force by</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{116}\) World Bank (24 Mar 15) Removing Barriers to Doing Business Will Help Create a Strong Private Sector in Myanmar

\(^{117}\) ADB (24 Mar 15) Myanmar: Cross-Cutting Governance Challenges

\(^{118}\) GNLM (22 Mar 15) PSCs signed for four oil fields off Rakhine State; Reuters (22 Mar 15) Energy firms BG, Woodside to invest $1.1 billion in four Myanmar blocks - ministry official; Myanmar Times (12 Mar 15) MIC provides permits for two more international oil companies; Myanmar Times (23 Mar 15) BG and Woodside to invest more than $1 billion after PSC

\(^{119}\) Reuters (25 Mar 15) Chevron inks oil, gas production sharing contract in Myanmar; Myanmar Times (25 Mar 15) Unocal’s production deal marks the return of American energy

\(^{120}\) Reuters (31 Mar 15) RIL signs production sharing pact for offshore blocks in Myanmar; World Oil (31 Mar 15) Eni, Reliance ink PSCs for exploration offshore Myanmar

\(^{121}\) UPI (31 Mar 15) Eni to explore for reserves offshore Myanmar; Offshore (31 Mar 15) Myanmar awards deepwater offshore tracts to Reliance, Eni; World Oil (31 Mar 15) Eni, Reliance ink PSCs for exploration offshore Myanmar
Police.

10 HRW issues a statement calling on police in Burma to end their crackdown on student protests and investigate and prosecute those responsible for the excessive use of force against protesters.

10 Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma releases a report, which documents 107 cases of human rights violations across Burma from July to December 2014 and says that the regime has made little progress protecting the human rights of its citizens.

12 US NGO Forest Trends releases its report “Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber, and Land Conflicts,” which finds that the regime allocated at least 5.2 million acres of Burma’s forests for large-scale projects yet to be implemented, and that the regime gained $621 billion (US$600 million) from trading timber cut in these areas.

12 In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Malaysian PM Najib Razak and President Thein Sein meet and agree to waive visa requirements for state officials and business travelers between the two countries.

13 Amnesty International issues a statement condemning the sentencing of two managers and the owner of a bar in Rangoon’s Bahan Township to two and a half years in prison for insulting religion, calling the verdict another blow to freedom of expression.

17 Chaung U Township Court, Sagaing Division, charges former NLD member Htin Lin Oo under Articles 295(a) and 298 of the Criminal Code for ‘insulting’ Buddhism during a 23 October speech in which he criticized the Organization for the Protection of National Race and Religion.

18 UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee calls on the regime to address ongoing challenges in Burma, including the excessive and disproportionate use of force during the 10 March crackdown on demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division.

18 Naypyidaw’s Pyinmana Township Court sentences five people to 21 years in prison with hard labor under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for fabricating a rape claim, which instigated the July 2014 sectarian violence in Mandalay.

19 Regime Election Commission issues codes of conduct for domestic and international election monitors.

20 At a public consultation in Rangoon on the proposed Investment Law, CSOs criticize the draft for only protecting investors and lacking provisions on issues such as land confiscation and environmental damage caused by development projects.

20 In an interview with BBC, President Thein Sein defends both the 10 March police crackdown on student demonstrators in Letpadan, Pegu Division, and the Tatmadaw’s continued role in politics.

24 ADB releases its annual development outlook, which forecasts 8.3% GDP growth for Burma in the 2015-16 fiscal year, with inflation likely to accelerate from 5.9 to 8.4%.

26 HRW issues a press release calling on the regime to extend its deadline for public comments on a draft new investment law and engage in “genuine consultations” with CSOs before submitting the bill to Parliament.

27 Myanmar Red Cross volunteer Moe Kyaw Than dies at Mandalay General Hospital, after being shot during the 17 February attack on a Red Cross convoy in Laogai Township, Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.

28 Regime Foreign Ministry releases a statement objecting to the UNHRC’s resolution on the human rights situation in Burma, including its use of the term Rohingya.

28 In Vientiane, Laos, Laotian President Choummaly Sayasone meets with Vice-President Nyan Tun.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN MARCH

“Monthly Chronology of Burma’s Political Prisoners for February 2015”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) http://goo.gl/zaO8Ee

“Annual Report 2014”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) http://goo.gl/8WoPvA


“Midnight Intrusions: Ending Guest Registration and Household Inspections in Myanmar”, Fortify Rights http://goo.gl/UZz803
“Persecution of the Rohingya in Burma/Myanmar and the Responsibility to Protect”, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect [http://goo.gl/bmbOIc](http://goo.gl/bmbOIc)


“Guns, Cronies and Crops”, Global Witness [http://goo.gl/wgnP7m](http://goo.gl/wgnP7m)


“From Novelty to Normalcy: Polling in Myanmar’s Democratic Transition”, Open Society Foundations (OSF) [http://goo.gl/s0UGHp](http://goo.gl/s0UGHp)


“Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue: 1 to 31 January”, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) [http://goo.gl/9qXV8k](http://goo.gl/9qXV8k)

“Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue: 1 to 28 February”, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) [http://goo.gl/gL43EX](http://goo.gl/gL43EX)

“Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar”, Yanghee Lee [http://goo.gl/ia0RZ5](http://goo.gl/ia0RZ5)

“Myanmar Investment Climate Assessment”, World Bank [http://goo.gl/W8i60v](http://goo.gl/W8i60v)