The Election Commission (EC) rejects 124 candidates, with Muslims and Rohingya being the main target, but reinstates 11 after international pressure.

Extremist group Ma Ba Tha continues to inflame and exploit religious tensions, and target the National League for Democracy (NLD).

Final voter lists still have widespread errors, with up to 250,000 people missing from lists in Hlaing Tharyar Township, Rangoon/Yangon Division alone.

The EC’s unrealistic requirements for registration cause around 2 million Burmese migrants overseas to lose their chance to vote on 8 November.

The EC defends controversial plans to print 32 million voter IDs which will be compulsory for some, inciting confusion over ballot-box ID regulations.

Regime-backed militia blocks campaigning in Kachin State and authorities prevent the NLD from accessing Coco Island and Naypyidaw military bases.

Political campaigns are plagued by reports of vote-buying, police surveillance, premature campaigning and other questionable campaign tactics.

The EC ignores prevailing ceasefires and disenfranchises 100,000 people in Karen/Kayin State’s post-conflict zones for ‘security reasons.’

The regime calls the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) a “do or die” mission no matter how many groups sign, and excludes key groups. Commander-in-Chief Sen Gen Min Aung Hlaing skips a peace summit to buy arms in Israel.

The Tatmadaw increases clashes across the country by 650%, disregarding peace negotiations, attacking villages and monasteries, robbing and using civilians as forced labor and human shields.

The National Human Rights Commission calls for the release of the Yadanabon graffiti protest students, and action against police involved in the violent crackdown in Letpadan in March, as pressure grows for the release of the students.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon calls on the regime to end hate speech and Rohingya disenfranchisement, calling Muslim candidate disqualifications “egregious,” and highlights the need for an inclusive NCA.
Election Commission rejects Muslim, Rohingya candidates

On 11 September, the Election Commission (EC) released its final candidate list, leaving 124 candidates disqualified, mainly on “citizenship grounds.” Muslims and Rohingya accounted for more than one third of those disqualified, adding to existing concern over the disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya [see June 2015 Burma Bulletin]. Up to 30 Rohingya candidates were rejected in Arakan/Rakhine State alone, the highest number of rejections in any state. Five of six Muslim parties saw the majority of their candidates rejected. Parties with heavy losses from disqualification include the Democracy and Human Rights Party (DHRP), which lost 17 of 18 Muslim candidates; the National Development Democratic Party which lost five of six candidates; and the National Development and Peace Party which lost all six. The latter two are effectively deregistered by the disqualifications, as the Political Parties Registration Law requires parties to field at least three candidates. The DHRP, however, was redeemed by later reinstatements by the EC [see below].

On 1 September, candidates Shwe Maung and Khin Lwin Lwin attended their appeal hearing with the Arakan State EC sub-commission to challenge their disqualification from contesting seats in Buthidaung Township [see August 2015 Burma Bulletin]. Both were told within 10 seconds of presenting their evidence that the disqualification stood. Responding to the fact that MP Shwe Maung ran under the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) ticket in 2010, EC spokesperson Win Ko reportedly blamed “the weakness of the former commission’s verifying process.”

On 17 September, the US State Department expressed concern at the rejection of Muslim candidates (as well as the continued 25% military seat allotment in the National Parliament) saying it risked undermining the international community’s confidence in the elections. On 20 September, the EC reinstated 11 of those disqualified following international pressure, but only one of them was from Arakan State. Those reinstated were: two candidates from the National Unity Party, two from the DHRP, one from New National Democracy Party, four from the National Unity Congress Party, and two independents.

On 25 September, the Carter Centre released a statement criticizing the candidate disqualifications, saying that requirements were enforced selectively and targeted ethnic and religious minorities. The statement put the current number of disqualified candidates at around 100.

The USDP had no candidates disqualified by the EC. The National League for Democracy (NLD), bowing to pressure from extremist group the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha), fielded no Muslim candidates but still had candidates disqualified.

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1 Myanmar Times (14 Sep 15) More than 100 scrubbed from final candidate list; Irrawaddy (23 Sep 15) 11 Candidates Rejoin the Race After UEC Appeal
2 Myanmar Times (14 Sep 15) More than 100 scrubbed from final candidate list
3 DVB (02 Sep 15) Muslims suffer brunt of candidate rejections; Myanmar Times (02 Sep 15) More candidates cut from race as appeals thrown out; Myanmar Times (07 Sep 15) Muslim candidates fear no shot at the polls
4 Carter Centre (25 Sep 15) Carter Center Issues Statement on Candidate Scrutiny Process and Campaign Environment in Myanmar
5 Myanmar Times (14 Sep 15) More than 100 scrubbed from final candidate list; DVB (2 Sep 15) Muslims suffer brunt of candidate rejections; Irrawaddy (22 Sep 15) 11 Candidates Rejoin the Race After UEC Appeal
6 Irrawaddy (01 Sep 15) Muslim Party Facing Political Oblivion After Candidates Rejected
7 DVB (02 Sep 15) Muslims suffer brunt of candidate rejections
8 Myanmar Times (02 Sep 15) More candidates cut from race as appeals thrown out
9 US State Department (17 Sep 15) Concerns About Burma's Candidate Disqualifications
10 Myanmar Times (25 Sep 15) Under pressure on all sides, UEC reinstates 11 Muslim candidates; Carter Centre (25 Sep 15) Carter Center Issues Statement on Candidate Scrutiny Process and Campaign Environment in Myanmar
11 Irrawaddy (23 Sep 15) 11 Candidates Rejoin the Race After UEC Appeal
12 Carter Centre (25 Sep 15) Carter Center Issues Statement on Candidate Scrutiny Process and Campaign Environment in Myanmar
13 Irrawaddy (14 Sep 15) USDP Survives Scrutiny as Over 100 Candidates Scrapped
14 BBC (08 Sep 15) Aung San SuuKyi's party excludes Muslim candidates; Myanmar Times (27 Aug 15) Muslim parties fear exclusion from election
Extremist nationalists continue to push anti-Muslim agenda ahead of elections

The Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha) continued to inflame hatred against Muslims and target the National League for Democracy (NLD), causing international concern over the exploitation of religious divisions ahead of election day:

- **1 September:** Ma Ba Tha distributed flyers attached to invitations for a ceremony organized by the Union Solidarity and Democracy Party (USDP), attempting to smear Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. The NLD has since filed a complaint to the EC against the USDP.  
- **15 September:** The US, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, Japan, Sweden, and UK embassies in Rangoon/Yangon issued a statement expressing concern at “the prospect of religion being used as a tool of division and conflict during the campaign season.”

**17 September:** In an interview with Radio Free Asia (RFA), extremist monk Wirathu said that the NLD is campaigning for Muslim votes and this is “not according to Buddha’s teaching.”

- **18 September:** The Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a press release in response to the joint statement issued by nine embassies on 15 September. It said the embassies’ statement misinformed the public and could distort the inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony that already existed in the country, and was disruptive to the “peaceful and positive environment” in the run-up to elections.
- **20 September:** Celebrating the passage of the discriminatory ‘Protection of Race and Religion’ laws at a rally in Bassein Township, Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady Division, extremist monks from Ma Ba Tha told the crowd not to vote for the party of “Islamists,” referring specifically to the NLD.

- **22 September:** NLD senior member Win Htein told the press that the party had filed an official complaint with the EC against Ma Ba Tha for unlawful use of religion to influence the election, under Article 58(c) of the People’s Assembly and National Assembly Election Laws.

- **23 September:** Ma Ba Tha issued a statement rejecting NLD accusations of a smear campaign, explaining that they “don’t want people to vote for the person who destroys our race and religion.”

**Election Commission publishes final voter lists filled with errors**

After the Election Commission (EC) published the final draft of voter lists on 14 September, voters throughout the country complained of widespread errors, including wrong birthdays and deceased residents. Although Arakan/Rakhine State EC sub-commission officials announced the successful display of all voter lists in Mrauk U Township – including 80,000 corrections – an Arakan National Party member said that only 200 of the 1,000 villages in the area received the latest voter lists since flood-hit roads still hinder transportation. By 28 September voter lists were still not displayed in Pwintphyu, Yenanchaung, and parts of Sidoktaya Townships, Magwe/Magway Division.

Thousands of voters condemned remaining errors in voter lists in Kawkareik Township, Karen/Kayin State, including the removal of many previously eligible voters. By 28 September the entire township, along with six others in Karen State, was excluded from the election by the EC due to ‘security concerns,’ despite ceasefires prevailing in the area since 2011 and 2012 [see 100,000 ethnic people disenfranchised in Karen/Kayin State post-conflict zones].

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15 EMG (10 Sep 15) NLD accuses USDP of defamation
16 US Embassy Rangoon (15 Sep 15) Joint Statement on Elections from the Embassies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America
17 RFA (17 Sep 15) Interview: ‘The Political Weather is not Good’ in Myanmar Now
18 President office (18 Sep 15) Joint statement on election issued; DVB (18 Sep 15) Burma rejects embassies’ election concerns; Irrawaddy (18 Sep 15) Burmese Govt Hits Back at Embassies Over Election Concerns; Xinhua (18 Sep 15) Myanmar rejects 9-country joint statement on election; GNLM (18 Sep 15) Joint statement on election issued
19 Irrawaddy (21 Sep 15) Ma Ba Tha: NLD is the Party of ‘Islamists’
20 Irrawaddy (23 Sep 15) NLD Accuses Ma Ba Tha of Unlawful Influence; Irrawaddy (24 Sep 15) NLD, Ma Ba Tha in War of Words over Campaign Claims; Open Democracy (30 Jul 10) Myanmar’s 2010 elections: a human rights perspective
21 Myanmar Times (25 Sep 15) Ma Ba Tha takes aim at defamation accusations
22 DVB (15 Sep 15) Election 2015: Revised voter lists fail to impress; EMG (22 Sep 15) Tin Oo warns of voter list errors; Myanmar times (22 Sep 15) NLD details laundry list of complaints against UEC
23 DVB (17 Sep 15) 2015 election: Voter lists ready in flood-hit areas
24 EMG (28 Sep 15) Voter lists yet to reach flood victims
25 KIC (24 Sep 15) Kawkareik Town Residents Angry as Thousands of Voters Vanish From Electoral Rolls
26 Myanmar Times (28 Sep 15) Over 100,000 people missing from voter lists in Kayin State; DVB (30 Sep 15) Election 2015: Polls won’t open in Karen State’s east
After displays closed on 27 September, more than 250,000 names remained missing from voter lists in Hlaing Tharyar Township, Rangoon/Yangon Division, raising concerns of fraud as the Rangoon Division EC sub-commission neglected to use updated resident data held by ward administrative offices. The Rangoon suburb has a high level of poverty and is an opposition stronghold, and many of the names are likely domestic migrants, squatters, and temporary householders who cannot afford to return to their home township to vote if their names do not appear on the final list.

Due to the continued errors, public interest in verifying the lists is low in many areas, especially where villagers don’t have time to visit remote polling centers. According to a 14-20 September field study by the non-partisan People’s Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) on voter presence at 421 display centers in rural and urban locations nationwide, 42% of sites lacked voter education materials, and 19% of displays were not open during officially designated hours. The EC’s failure to inform voters has been highlighted by various political parties, including the Kayan National Democracy Party (KNDP), which discovered that many rural voters in Bawlakhe Township, Karen/Myanmar were unaware of what the elections were and why they were happening.

On 21 September, senior NLD officials told press that voter list errors remain a chief concern that could unfairly benefit the USDP, and complained that the EC had ignored many NLD complaints, especially those regarding the USDP. NLD patron Tin Oo said the EC is “not a responsible organization” and criticized EC Chairman Tin Aye’s casual recognition of voter list errors. NLD senior official Win Htein voiced worry that election day violence could erupt due to voter list errors. On 22 September in Kawmoo Township, Rangoon Division, Aung San Suu Kyi speculated that the regime may be attempting to prevent people from voting.

Two million overseas migrants left un-registered

On 8 September, it was reported that fewer than 19,000 of 2 million overseas migrants eligible to vote had met the registration deadline to cast their ballot in November. According to activists, most migrants faced difficulty providing the documents required to register, such as a printed copy of their local ward voter list. Mixed messages and a lack of announcements from Burmese embassies abroad contributed to the problem: the Bangkok embassy issued a single statement and conducted zero awareness-raising activities, and the Foreign Ministry set a registration deadline for late August which the EC later said was tentative, claiming that authorities would have accepted applications submitted later. On 2 September EC Chair Tin Aye blamed voters for the EC’s failure to inform voters has been highlighted by various political parties, including the Kayan National Democracy Party (KNDP), which discovered that many rural voters in Bawlakhe Township, Karen/Myanmar were unaware of what the elections were and why they were happening.

Election Commission defends controversial printing of new voter ID documents

On 16 September, it was reported that the Election Commission (EC) plans to administer 32 million voter ID cards on 1 November, which will be required for voters lacking a formal ID card ("Pink Card"). Citizens cannot send someone to pick up their voter ID cards in their place. The plan contradicts prior statements by EC Chairman Tin Aye that “if a person does not have either ID or

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27 Myanmar Times (18 Sep 15) Voter list manipulation feared in Hlaing Tharar township; Myanmar Times (28 Sep 15) Domestic migrants, temporary residents still not on voter lists
28 Myanmar Times (18 Sep 15) Voter list manipulation feared in Hlaing Tharar township; Myanmar Times (28 Sep 15) Domestic migrants, temporary residents still not on voter lists
29 Myanmar Times (22 Sep 15) Voter list manipulation feared in Hlaing Tharar township; Myanmar Times (28 Sep 15) Domestic migrants, temporary residents still not on voter lists
30 Myanmar Times (22 Sep 15) Concerns for election turnout along remote Myeik coast
31 EMG (22 Sep 15) Bawlakhe villagers unaware of election
32 Narinjara (21 Sep 15) Kyaupkyu candidate for lower house says more voter awareness needed; Radio Free Asia (23 Sep 15) 88 Generation Group Pushes Voter Education in Myanmar’s Irrawaddy Region
33 EMG (22 Sep 15) Bawlakhe villagers unaware of election
34 Myanmar Times (22 Sep 15) NLD details laundry list of complaints against UEC
35 EMG (25 Sep 15) Flawed voter lists may stir violence: NLD member
36 EMG (25 Sep 15) Suu Kyi questions motives behind flawed voter lists
37 Reuters (08 Sep 15) Most Myanmar citizens overseas left out of historic vote
38 Reuters (08 Sep 15) Most Myanmar citizens overseas left out of historic vote
39 Mizzima (03 Sep 15) Only 18,000 citizens living abroad register to vote
40 Myanmar Times (16 Sep 15) UEC rejects concerns over voter ID card plan
41 Myanmar Times (16 Sep 15) UEC rejects concerns over voter ID card plan
documents, but if the village head, elders and relevant people confirm [this person’s residence], we add him to the voter list.”

Since Tin Aye had also previously confirmed no laws prohibit people from voting without ID, voters and civil society members are still unclear about ID requirements for casting ballots on election day.

On 16 September it was reported that political commentators questioned the legality and practicality of printing and distributing the new documents, though senior EC official Thaung Hlaing reportedly said that civil society representatives, political parties and independent candidates may observe the distribution process. It has since been reported Thaung Hlaing retracted his comment that the Washington-based International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) would provide resources for printing.

Local EC staff delay parties from campaigning, bar access to military voters

Although the start of the official campaign period on 8 September saw both the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Union Solidarity and Democracy Party (USDP) kick off their campaigns with rallies in Mandalay, several parties elsewhere were halted by Election Commission (EC) sub-commission delays. Individual candidates vying for seats in Mandalay Division were unable to begin campaigning because the Mandalay Division EC sub-commission was not ready to publish the approved candidate lists. The Mon National Party was forced to delay its campaign launch as it struggled to receive approval from Moulmein Township EC sub-commission for its itinerary, having to coordinate schedules with five other parties and gain clearance for campaign posters at the municipal level.

On 25 September, NLD senior official Win Htein told press that Rangoon/Yangon divisional government had obstructed NLD candidates from visiting Coco Island, where the number of eligible voters has increased 466% after a supposed influx of construction crews to work on naval bases. The NLD alleged that the army is boosting troop numbers there to ensure the USDP wins national and Rangoon divisional parliamentary seats, citing an increase from 200 to 700 personnel and their families. USDP candidates have reportedly been given transport to the island on military airplanes. Win Htein said the NLD has lodged complaints with the EC, since candidates may not be able to campaign there at all.

On 16 September it was reported that NLD candidate Yee Mon has faced major difficulties campaigning in Naypyidaw’s Pobbathiri Township where former Lt Gen and retired Defense Minister Wai Lwin is campaigning for the USDP. Yee Mon said that he has not been granted access to the township’s military personnel, which account for one tenth of the population.

On 22 September, Chin National Democratic Party (CNDP) Secretary Salai Thian Uk Thang echoed the complaints of several parties as he told press that the CNDP has struggled to campaign in flood-ravaged Kachin and Chin States since critical infrastructure is still demolished.
NLD self-censors in restrictive free speech environment

It was reported on 4 and 15 September that, due to concerns about overbearing EC scrutiny, the NLD has selected six senior officials as the primary spokespeople on various issues regarding everything from party policy to comments on the election campaign. The NLD has warned its candidates to avoid meeting with people who may be listed as part of an ‘unlawful association’ in ethnic areas.55

Continued fighting endangers elections in ethnic areas

In Shan State, Joint Secretary Sai Leik of the Shan Nationalities Democracy Party (SNLD) voiced concern about the proximity of armed clashes to voter education workshops. On 12 September, he condemned Tatmadaw offensives as politically motivated to manipulate the prospects for ethnic groups, saying that conflict “poses real danger for the right to freely campaign.”56 It was reported on 15 September that in Taunggyi Township, Shan State, NLD Chairman Tin Maung Toe similarly condemned the danger posed to elections by armed conflict.57 Due to increased Tatmadaw civilian abuse and offensives that include the use of helicopters and fighter jets, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S) advised political parties on 14 September to suspend campaigns in 16 Northern, Southern, and Eastern Shan State Townships.58

On 16 September, it was reported that voter lists are yet to be fully compiled in conflict ridden Sumprabum and Putao Townships, Kachin State, leading to uncertainty about whether polling will occur.59 It was reported on 29 September that the EC is monitoring the outbreak of clashes in Mansi Township, Kachin State, and a state-level EC representative said authorities would arrange for voters to cast ballots elsewhere if cancellations occur.60 On 30 September, Aung San Suu Kyi removed Mansi Township from her five-day Kachin State itinerary.61

On 15 September it was reported that Pao National Liberation Organization (PNLO) Chairman Khun Myint Tun urged the EC to declare whether or not elections will be held in conflict areas.62 The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is yet to be signed, which was cited by the Transnational Institute on 8 September as a factor likely to cause the last minute cancellation of some constituencies.63

On 15 September it was reported that 12 constituencies in Shan State have no candidates standing.64 This includes Pangshang, Namphan, Pangwaun, and Mongmao Townships in Wa Self-Administered Division, and Mongla Township, confirming the cancellations announced by the Election Commission (EC) in August.65

Armed groups block campaigning in Shan, Kachin States

Armed groups have taken a bolder stance in blocking electoral and campaign activities in September:

- **16 September:** Armed groups, allegedly including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), entered Hoact and Monepaw Villages, Kutkai Township, Shan State and forced the removal of voter lists.66
- **22 September:** Union Solidarity and Democracy (USDP) MP and leader of the formally disbanded New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDAK), Zakhung Ting Ying, sent a letter to the National League for Democracy (NLD) ordering them not to campaign in Waingmaw, Chipwi, and Tsawlaw Townships,
Kachin State, because the “area is not yet under the government’s reforms.”\textsuperscript{67} NDAK later banned all political party campaigns, excepting Zakhung Ting Ying’s son, Zakhung Ying Hsawn, who will stand for the Chipwi regional seat for the Unity Democracy Party of Kachin State.\textsuperscript{68}

- **23 September:** It was reported that the EC directed its Kachin State branch to meet NDAK leader Zakhung Ting Ying to inform him of the election Code of Conduct, yet state-level EC Chairman Maung Maung Kun told press he doubted the EC’s state sub-commission had authority to punish Zakhung Ting Ying.\textsuperscript{69}

- **24 September:** It was reported that NLD candidate Yadana Zoe Zaw said that police have offered security to candidates in Kyaukme Township, Shan State, since ethnic armed groups have set travel restrictions.\textsuperscript{70}

- **24 September:** The NLD and the Lawwaw National Unity and Development Party (LNUDP) filed formal complaints against NDAK’s prohibitions on campaigning in areas of Kachin State.\textsuperscript{71}

- **29 September:** Political party representatives, Zakhung Ting Ying, and Kachin State EC sub-commission officials negotiated a deal for peaceful campaign activities in NDAK territory, though some candidates still expect to face obstacles.\textsuperscript{72}

On 29 September, Human Rights Watch included NDAK in its warning that the Tatmadaw is using proxy militias to intimidate voters and prevent candidates from campaigning in ethnic areas.\textsuperscript{73}

**Allegations of questionable campaign tactics continue**

Political campaigns in the run up to the election have been plagued by accusations of bribes and other questionable campaign tactics [see August 2015 Burma Bulletin].\textsuperscript{74} In September, the following incidents were reported:

- **1 September:** The National League for Democracy (NLD) branch office in Zabuthiri Township, Naypyidaw, was broken into. Nothing was stolen, raising suspicions that the culprit was looking to obtain information.\textsuperscript{75}

- **2 September:** Former Lt Gen and recently retired Defense Minister Wai Lwin donated 64 million kyat (US$49,900) for electricity to power villages in Naypyidaw’s Pobbathiri Township, where he will contest for a parliamentary seat.\textsuperscript{76}

- **2 September:** EC Chairman Tin Aye said that President’s Office Minister Soe Thein did not break the 10 million kyat (US$7,800) campaign spending limit, after he spent more than 300 million kyat (US$232,000) in Karenni/Kayah State, since his spending occurred before the designated campaign period.\textsuperscript{77}

- **6 September:** NLD candidate Than Zin Tun filed a police report against two rival candidates, Kyaw Win and Myint Hlaing, for conspiring to buy votes. The allegations related to the distribution of umbrellas emblazoned with the message, “Let’s vote candidate U Myint Hlaing,” and donations of other gifts, to local schools. The police dismissed the case, saying it was beyond their jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{78}

- **10 September:** Kyaw Win dropped what appears to have been a retaliatory complaint against the NLD; he had accused the party of premature campaigning during voter education talks in August.\textsuperscript{79}

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\textsuperscript{67} Irrawaddy (23 Sep 15) Militia Leader Orders NLD Out of Kachin State Races; Kachin News (24 Sep 15) NDAK chief bans NLD from campaigning in his fiefdom in Kachin State

\textsuperscript{68} DVB (29 Sep 15) Kachin militia bans election campaigning in self-administered region

\textsuperscript{69} Irrawaddy (25 Sep 15) Kachin Election Body Requests Meeting with Militia Leader over NLD Edict

\textsuperscript{70} RFA (24 Sep 15) Political Campaigning 'Difficult' in Myanmar Regions Hit by Floods and War

\textsuperscript{71} DVB (29 Sep 15) Kachin militia bans election campaigning in self-administered region

\textsuperscript{72} Myanmar Times (30 Sep 15) Kachin State warlord ordered to let opponents campaign

\textsuperscript{73} HRW (29 Sep 15) Dispatches: Militias and Electoral Intimidation in Burma

\textsuperscript{74} Xinhua (02 Sep 15) Myanmar election commission vows free, fair election; RFA (02 Sep 15) Myanmar’s Election Chief Vows Free and Fair Elections; EMG (03 Sep 15) UEC warns Government Cabinet members on misuse of State property and funds

\textsuperscript{75} Myanmar Times (04 Sep 15) NLD reports break-in at Nay Pyi Taw MP’s office; EMG (4 Sep 15) Breaking into Democracy; EMG(10 Sep 15) Breaking into Democracy

\textsuperscript{76} Myanmar Times (03 Sep 15) Minister faces vote-buying allegations in Kayah State

\textsuperscript{77} Myanmar Times (03 Sep 15) Minister faces vote-buying allegations in Kayah State; Reuters (11 Sep 15) Myanmar candidate backs spending splash as opposition eyes election win

\textsuperscript{78} Myanmar Times (07 Sep 15) Vote-buying reports pervade ahead of campaigning; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 15) Ex-government official drops complaint against NLD leader

\textsuperscript{79} Myanmar Times (10 Sep 15) Ex-government official drops complaint against NLD leader
• **12 September:** It was reported that NLD members were monitored by police during the party’s campaign rally in Thaton Township, Mon State.  

• **16 September:** It was reported that NLD spokesperson Win Htein strongly dismissed claims made by former military members on social media that former British diplomat Joe Fisher, currently a liaison officer for the NLD, is a “British spy.”  

• **21 September:** The Union Solidarity and Democracy Party (USDP) was accused of vote buying in Myaungmya Township, Irrawaddy Division, after it appeared many supporters were lured to a rally by the provision of a free meal.  

• **23 September:** A young NLD member was found beaten next to a broken NLD flag in a cemetery in Myaungmya, Irrawaddy Division, raising suspicion of a politically motivated crime. Three suspects are currently being investigated.  

• **25 September:** It was reported that USDP offered 5,000 kyat (US$3.83) per month to trishaw drivers who agree to display the party’s flag and more than 10,000 kyat (US$7.65) to drivers who attach party stickers.  

• **28 September:** Political parties reported that President’s Office Minister Soe Thein attempted to buy votes at a local festival near Bawlakhe Township, Karenni State, by ordering the administrator of the festival to distribute leaflets and hats.  

• **28 September:** It was reported that an NLD campaign poster was destroyed in Thabaung Township, Irrawaddy Division.  

• **30 September:** Ko Ko Myint, Chair of the NLD Ingapu chapter accused President Thein Sein in a statement to the press of vote-fishing on behalf of the USDP rather than supporting recovery projects in the region when visiting Ingapu Township, Irrawaddy Division.  

**100,000 ethnic people disenfranchised in Karen/Kayin State post-conflict zones**

On 15 September, more than 20,000 people – 80% of whom are ethnic Mon – in Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State, were blacklisted by the Election Commission (EC) due to “security concerns,” as armed groups allegedly blocked Karen State EC sub-commission staff from confirming voters. By 28 September, 80,000 more voters had been disenfranchised in Karen State as the EC cancelled polling in more villages in Kyainnseikyi, as well as dozens of villages in Hpaa-n, Hlaingbwe, Kawkreik, Myawaddy, and Thandaung Townships. Karen State EC sub-commission Chair Kyaw Win Maung justified the disenfranchisement by citing the lack of administrative offices, reliable voter information, and security guarantees. Kyaw Win Maung later accused the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Karen National Union (KNU) of intimidating village administrators, and claimed that he never received a letter guaranteeing safe, secure elections from NMSP officials. These exclusions have led to criticism of the EC from multiple political parties, who claim that ceasefires drawn up in 2011 and 2012 guarantee communities and political parties the ability to operate in a secure environment in these constituencies. On 21 September, it was reported that Kyainnseikyi Township Deputy Director Ye Aung vouched for the security conditions of villages under NMSP control, saying that development projects and work by the Ministry of Education are routinely
Regime confirms exclusionary 'nationwide' ceasefire will not stop fighting

The regime continued to pursue an exclusionary Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Disturbingly, it confirmed that fighting will not cease with the signing of the pact, but only when several procedures take place in its wake.

On 9 September, nine leaders from ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) involved in NCA negotiations and three top negotiators from the United Nationalities Federation Council (UNFC) had their first joint meeting with President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw. EAOs, especially the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) restated their request that the NCA include the Kokang-based Myanmar Nation Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAAA) and its allies, the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA). Regime spokespeople told press after the meeting that individual requirements would be placed on the three groups before their accession to the NCA. However, speaking on behalf of the EAOs, NMSP Vice Chairman and member of the ethnic bloc’s Senior Delegation (SD) Nai Hong Sar said the meeting was unsatisfactory and that President Thein Sein still refused to guarantee the three groups’ inclusion in the NCA.

When contacted by media on 9 September, MNDAAA spokesperson Htun Myat Linn said that the MNDAAA had had no direct communication with President Thein Sein, countering a statement by the regime’s Myanmar Peace Center spokesperson Hla Maung Shwe after the peace summit. On 10 September, the MNDAAA jointly issued a statement with the TNLA and AA requesting to be included in the NCA. In Rangoon/Yangon on 14 September chief regime negotiator Aung Min explained to 145 representatives from 78 political parties that the MNDAAA and AA are excluded because the government did not know they existed when Thein Sein began the NCA process.

Although ethnic leaders expected to also meet with Commander-in-Chief Sen Gen Min Aung Hlaing during the 9 September peace talks, he instead visited Israel to purchase arms and strengthen bilateral military ties, sending low-ranking Tatmadaw officers in his place. The regime has since maintained a selective engagement strategy, sending individual invites to the 15 negotiating EAOs for additional talks in Rangoon on 20 September, and calling the NCA signing a “‘do or die’ mission,” no matter how many ethnic groups join. On 18 September, Nai Hong Sar said that ethnic leaders told the regime Peacemaking Working Committee to send invites to the SD rather than each group individually. Echoing complaints elsewhere, on 24 September Nai Hong Sar was quoted saying that several EAO leaders are suspicious of a “divide and conquer” strategy by the regime that —

93 Myanmar Times (21 Sep 15) Ethnic Mon left off electoral rolls 94 Myanmar Times (21 Sep 15) Ethnic Mon left off electoral rolls 95 AFP (09 Sep 15) Myanmar president pushes peace plan in ethnic rebel talks 96 IMNA (11 Sep 15) Solidarity amongst ethnic armed groups in NCA inking, affirms NSP Chairman Nai Htaw Mon 97 RFA (09 Sep 15) Myanmar Peace Deal Tentatively Set For October as President, Ethnic Leaders Meet; DVB (09 Sep 15) President vows to include warring factions in talks; Irrawaddy (09 Sep 15) Tentative Agreement Reached for Ceasefire Signing Next Month; IMNA (Sep 11 15) President proposes Sept. 29 for NCA inking 98 Irrawaddy (24 Sep 15) At Loggerheads Over Inclusivity, Prospects Dim for Pre-Poll Ceasefire 99 Irrawaddy (09 Sep 15) Tentative Agreement Reached for Ceasefire Signing Next Month 100 Irrawaddy (09 Sep 15) Tentative Agreement Reached for Ceasefire Signing Next Month; Myanmar Times (11 Sep 15) Kokang groups reject direct peace talks; Reuters (11 Sep 15) Excluded armed groups say they want to join Myanmar peace talks 101 Myanmar Times (15 Sep 15) Parties quiz government over how exclusive ceasefire can be ‘nationwide’; RFA (14 Sep 15) Myanmar Government Sets Date For Start of Political Dialogue; IMNA (16 Sep 15) Gov’t unaware of AA, MNDAAA, subsequent absence in NCA inking, says Minister U Aung Min 102 DVB (10 Sep 15) Army chief skips peace talks for Israeli military dealings; DVB (08 Sep 15) Opinion: Divisive ceasefire won’t bring peace; EMG (07 Sep 15) President to discuss ceasefire with five ethnic armed group leaders 103 Irrawaddy (18 Sep 15) Govt Invites Ethnic Reps to Rangoon in Push to Confirm Ceasefire Date; SHAN (25 Sep 15) Ceasefire signing ‘do or die’ for Naypyidaw 104 Irrawaddy (18 Sep 15) Govt Invites Ethnic Reps to Rangoon in Push to Confirm Ceasefire Date
alongside continued Tatmadaw offensives – undermines Naypyidaw’s sincerity about peace.\textsuperscript{105} On 10 September, President’s Office Minister and Myanmar Peace Center senior advisor Hla Maung Shwe said fighting will not cease with the signing of the NCA, but only when several procedures take place in its wake.\textsuperscript{106} The following day he said that the Tatmadaw has a greater commitment to complete the NCA than EAOs, and on 24 September said the regime will “not wait for an all-inclusive signing.”\textsuperscript{107}

The regime planned another NCA summit for 3 October, promising that groups who accede to the NCA will be delisted as ‘unlawful associations,’ including those who don’t sign the NCA at first but participate in framework discussions.\textsuperscript{108} On 5 and 6 September, Aung San Suu Kyi addressed crowds in Hsihseng and Hopone Townships, Shan State, cautioning ethnic leaders to avoid hastily signing the NCA in order to ensure its legitimacy.\textsuperscript{109} With the MNDAA, TNLA, and AA still excluded as of 30 September, only seven – less than half – of the EAOs have agreed to sign the NCA in October.\textsuperscript{110}

**Tatmadaw clashes in Kachin and Shan States continue despite peace negotiations**

In September, Tatmadaw troops continued to clash with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Arakan Army (AA) the Restoration Council Shan State/ Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S), the Myanmar National Defense Alliance Army (MNDAAD), and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) militias. Sixty seven clashes marked a near 650% increase in conflict from August, causing civilian casualties and forcing many to flee their homes.\textsuperscript{111}

- **1 September:** Tatmadaw and Border Guard Bangladesh troops attacked the Arakan Army along the Burma/Myanmar-Bangladesh border.\textsuperscript{112}
- **6-8 September:** Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA Battalion 12 between Shwegu and Bhamo Townships, Kachin State, and pursued the KIA force that made a retreat to honor the ceasefire meeting in Naypyidaw, later threatening them with air strikes.\textsuperscript{113}
- **7-8 September:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 12 clashed with RCSS/SSA-S near Sarn Bu Village, Mong Pieng Township, Shan State with several casualties reported.\textsuperscript{114}
- **16 September:** Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 152 and 99 clashed with RCSS/SSA-S near Kolam Town, Kolam Township, Shan State, using helicopters and reportedly fighter jets.\textsuperscript{115}
- **18-21 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Mansi Township, Kachin State, forcing over 180 villagers to flee their homes.\textsuperscript{116}
- **20 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Mongkhaung Village, Mansi Township, Burma, trapping villagers in the crossfire for days.\textsuperscript{117}
- **21 September:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 121 clashed with KIA Battalion 12 near Nam Lim Pa Village, Mansi Township, firing 60 mm mortar rounds on the KIA ten times before posting at a church in the village.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{105}Irrawaddy (24 Sep 15) At Loggerheads Over Inclusivity, Prospects Dim for Pre-Poll Ceasefire; Irrawaddy (18 Sep 15) Govt Invites Ethnic Reps to Rangoon in Push to Confirm Ceasefire Date; KIC (01 Sep 15) “Without Real Political Road Map, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Leads Nowhere...”; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 15) Ten reported dead in latest clashes

\textsuperscript{106}Myanmar Times (24 Sep 15) SSA-South and military wrangle over old ceasefire; SHAN (10 Sep 15) Ceasefire agreement may only “reduce” fighting; IMNA (13 Sep 15) NCA may be signed; without guarantee of peace says MPC

\textsuperscript{107}GNLM (13 Sep 15) Tatmadaw lawmakers hope for peace the most; Irrawaddy (24 Sep 15) At Loggerheads Over Inclusivity, Prospects Dim for Pre-Poll Ceasefire

\textsuperscript{108}RFA (09 Sep 15) Myanmar Peace Deal Tentatively Set For October as President, Ethnic Leaders Meet; Xinhua (10 Sep 15) “Without Real Political Road Map, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Leads Nowhere...”; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 15) Ten reported dead in latest clashes

\textsuperscript{109}Myanmar’s peace process on way to getting breakthrough

\textsuperscript{110}Reuters (06 Sep 15) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi says rebel groups shouldn’t rush peace deal

\textsuperscript{111}Myanmar truce talks hit snag as many groups not ready to sign; DVB (29 Sep 15) Armed groups split on signing of peace pact; DPA and DVB (30 Sep 15) Myanmar ceasefire talks collapse; RFA (30 Sep 15) Myanmar Political Party Leaders Call For All-Inclusive Peace Accord


\textsuperscript{113}Mizzima (01 Sep 15) Bangladesh and Myanmar in joint offensive against Arakan Army

\textsuperscript{114}DVB (09 Sep 15) KIA, govt troops clash as peace talks proceed; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 15) Ten reported dead in latest clashes; Irrawaddy (09 Sep 15) Renewed Fighting Tempers Hopes for Peace as Negotiators Meet; Kachinland News (08 Sep 15) Burmese Army Launches Offensives Ahead of Naypyidaw Meeting

\textsuperscript{115}EMG (12 Sep 15) SNLD claims dirty tricks over Shan battles; EMG (11 Sep 15) SNLD concerned over battles in Shan State

\textsuperscript{116}SHAN (18 Sep 15) Burma Army introduces use of helicopters in clash with Shan State Army; Irrawaddy (17 Sep 15) Shan Armed Group Calls for Election Campaign Halt as Fighting Flares

\textsuperscript{117}Irrawaddy (21 Sep 15) Scores Displaced Following Fighting in Kachin State’s Mansi Township

\textsuperscript{118}EMG (28 Sep 15) Kachin chief called to rescue trapped civilians; Irrawaddy (24 Sep 15) Elderly, Disabled Trapped Amid Kachin State Clashes
• 23 September: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces between Mongkong and Manwainglay Villages, Mansi Township, Kachin State, killing two civilians.  
• 23 September: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Mai Hkwang Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State, killing three civilians.  
• 24-25 September: Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA forces near Kawnglein Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State, severely injuring a two year old and an elderly woman.  
• 27 September: Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA Battalion 1 near Mansi Town, Mansi Township, Kachin State, using a monastery compound as a base to fire heavy artillery.  

On 28 September it was reported that the Tatmadaw set up heavy artillery on a hill in the middle of Mansi Town to shell KIA forces, forcing residents of two wards to flee their homes; Tatmadaw troops overtook the local government offices, police station, markets, and schools, forcing their closure.  

Civilian Abuse in ethnic conflict areas

The Tatmadaw continued to use forced labor and cause civilian casualties in September:

• 12 September: Tatmadaw troops from IB 12 and LIBs 422 and 517 fired artillery at civilians honoring monks at a temple in Nawng Pa Deb Village, near Mong Pawn in Loilem Township, Shan State, injuring several villagers and killing one, before ground troops looted the village, shooting an elderly grandmother, beating a man whose leg later had to be amputated, and abducting four villagers — including two minors — to be forced to work as porters.  
• 21 September: It was reported that, according to Shan Human Rights Foundation, the Tatmadaw used ten villagers as human shields in recent skirmishes in Kunhing Township, Shan State.  
• 22 September: Tatmadaw troops opened fire on Wan Kong Weng Village, Muse Township, Shan State, damaging several residences and injuring one civilian, after which they looted the homes of residents; one 60 year old man was hit with a gun and had $10,000 stolen.  
• 25 September: Tatmadaw troops forced nearly two dozen civilians from Zupmai and Man Seng villages between Mongmit and Mantong Townships, Shan State to work as army porters and act as human shields against landmines.  

Rules for election to News Media Council announced

On 3 September, the interim Press Council and the Electoral Board for the new News Media Council (NMC) gave a press conference in Rangoon/Yangon, outlining the rules governing the election of candidates to the NMC. The nine-member Electoral Board, headed by former Central Bank Chairman Maung Thann, was formed on 31 August and will oversee the elections, which are set to take place at the same time as Burma/Myanmar’s general elections. The following rules were announced:

• Candidates have until 2 October to register their candidacy with the Board.  
• Two members of the interim Press Council are appointed to the News Media Council without being elected, who were announced as interim Press Council Vice Chair Khin Maung Lay and member Pe Myint.  

199Kachinland News (22 Sep 15) Battles Continue Unabated in Mansi Township  
199DVB (25 Sep 15) Couple killed in KIA-Burmese army clash  
199Irrawaddy (28 Sep 15) Villagers Forced to Flee as Kachin State Clashes Continue  
199DVB (25 Sep 15) Couple killed in KIA-Burmese army clash  
199Myanmar Times (28 Sep 15) Villagers stranded in conflict zone as fighting flares once more in Kachin State; Kachinland News (28 Sep 15) Burmese Army Troops Fired Artillery From Monastery Compound in Mansi  
199DVB (28 Sep 15) Kachin villagers abandon homes amid intense fighting  
199SHAN (14 Sep 15) Burma Army Artillery and Knife Attack Kills One Villager and Injures Six Others in Southern Shan State; Shan Human Rights Foundation (28 Sep 15) Burma Army shelling, killing and torture of civilians in Mong Pawn constitute war crimes  
199KIC (21 Sep 15) Burma Army “Using Civilians as ‘Human Shields’ in Shan State  
199SHAN (24 Sep 15) Burma Army attacks and robs villagers in Muse Township  
199Kachinland News (28 Sep 15) 9 Zupmai Villagers and 10 Man Seng Villagers Forced to Porter for 88th LID Soldiers  
199Irrawaddy (04 Sep 15) Selection Process for New Press Body to Begin Next Month  
199EMG (10 Sep 15) Media council to be formed  
199Myanmar times (04 Sep 15) Media industry readies for its own election  
199Myanmar times (04 Sep 15) Media industry readies for its own election
• The News Media Council will consist of:
  - One person from each of the following groups: the Myanmar Journalist Network, the Myanmar Journalist Association, the Myanmar Journalist Union, Burma News International.
  - Six people from news media organizations; eight from publishing/ writing/ poetry/ cartoonist associations; two independent candidates; and four legal, social or economic experts.
  - Three members appointed by the President and Speakers of the National and People’s Assemblies.

On 4 September, Eleven Media Group released a statement in response, saying it was doubtful that the new Council would be representative of media organizations and journalists who are “oppressed” and “harassed” in Burma. It also suggested that the timing of the elections for the News Media Council, coinciding with the 8 November election, is intentional and undermines the role of media in the general election. On 7 September, PEN Myanmar released a statement condemning the lack of transparency surrounding the rules, saying that the allocation of two interim Press Council members to the News Media Council breached Article 10(a) of the Media Law.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Extremist group celebrates discriminatory laws as first person charged

The extremist nationalist group the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha) held celebrations across Burma/Myanmar throughout September following the 31 August signing into law of the Monogamy Law, the final of the four “Protection of Race and Religion” laws. The celebrations began on 14 September at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon/Yangon. On 20 September, the group held a rally in Bassein Township, Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady Division, where it warned against voting for those who didn’t support the legislation. At a rally of around 30,000 people on 21 September in Mandalay, extremists held signs saying the laws were for “women’s security,” and extremist monk Wirathu praised the laws, saying, “the Bengalis [pejorative term for Rohingya] come into the area and impregnate the Arakan women.”

On 10 September, Catholic Archbishop of Rangoon Cardinal Charles Maung Bo released a statement criticizing the laws’ passage, calling them a “death knell to [the] hope” of peace and national reconciliation in Burma.

On 18 September, it was reported that the first person to be charged under the newly enacted Monogamy Law was a Muslim man from Wakema Township, Irrawaddy Division, who had been having a consensual relationship with a Buddhist woman while married. The case was brought against him after local Ma Ba Tha members filed a complaint.

National Human Rights Commission calls for charges against Letpadan police

Calls for the release of Letpadan student protestors and legal action to be taken against police brutality grew stronger as student trials continued in September:

• 1 September: Tharawaddy District Court, Pegu/Bago Division, cut short a trial hearing for students arrested in the Letpadan crackdown after the judge refused an appeal by defense lawyers, sparking a
call from students for a new judge. The hearing was the 15th since the students were detained in the violent crackdown in March [see March 2015 Burma Bulletin].

- **1 September**: Kyauktada Township Court, Rangoon/Yangon Division, continued the trial of students Zayar Lwin and Paing Ye Thu, detained in July under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code for participating in a peaceful protest. Police threatened to cancel the hearing if the students continued to wear t-shirts showing support for the Failed Law movement.

- **9 September**: Tharawaddy District Court, Pegu Division, refused an appeal by Letpadan students to have their case dismissed. The court also dismissed a request filed by the students to press charges against police involved in the Letpadan crackdown, saying this could only be done with presidential approval according to Article 197(1) of the Criminal Code. Defense lawyer Robert San Aung has said he will appeal to the Burma/Myanmar’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

- **10 September**: Myanmar Lawyer’s Network released a statement marking the six month anniversary of the Letpadan crackdown, criticizing the weak prosecution case against detained students and calling for their release.

On 11 September, in a surprising move from the otherwise regime-aligned body, Burma’s NHRC called for an investigation into the violent crackdown on student protestors in Letpadan in March, saying that police officers found guilty of misconduct should be charged. The Commission noted that protestors received injuries to the head and face, and said that beatings went against official police procedures and should be met with legal action. However, the Commission also stated that activists who threw stones or destroyed barricades should still be charged. Defense lawyer for the Letpadan students Robert San Aung called the Commission’s report unfair, as it avoided holding the police fully responsible, despite the evidence.

In a separate statement on 11 September, the Commission called for the proper treatment of the Yadana students arrested for a graffiti protest in June and currently in solitary confinement. They were denied bail in August to sit their exams [see August 2015 Burma Bulletin], and the Commission called for their appeal to be considered.

**Women suffer the brunt of conflict, lack support or access to justice: report**

On 23 September, Asia Justice and Rights, Kachin Women's Association Thailand, Karen Women Empowerment Group, and Women Organizations Network of Myanmar released a report detailing women’s experiences of conflict in Burma/Myanmar. The report, titled “Opening the Box: Women’s Experiences of War, Peace, and Impunity in Myanmar,” was based on research workshops with 29 Karen/Kayin and Kachin women and former political prisoners, which were held in 2014. The report’s findings include:

- Women in Burma’s conflicts experience systematic sexual violence by the Tatmadaw, and in prison. Several of the women participants had family members who had been raped and murdered by the Tatmadaw.
- Most women experience impunity as the norm – perpetrators are not punished, victims are not acknowledged and reparations for loss of land due to conflict are non-existent.

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141 DVB (02 Sep 15) Shouting match derails Letpadan student trial; EMG (03 Sep 15) Trial for Letpadan student protestors stopped before completion after a row
142 EMG (03 Sep 15) Trial for Letpadan student protestors stopped before completion after a row
143 EMG (03 Sep 15) Govt. prohibits Failed Law Movement
144 EMG (10 Sep 15) Court rejects appeal for dismissal of charges against Letpadan student protestors
145 EMG (10 Sep 15) Court rejects appeal for dismissal of charges against Letpadan student protestors
146 EMG (22 Sep 15) Bid to sue police rejected
147 EMG (12 Sep 15) Lawyers demand student release
148 GNLM (12 Sep 15) Detained students’ rights must be upheld: HR commission
149 Bangkok Post (12 Sep 15) Myanmar rights body speaks out
150 Myanmar Times (14 Sep 15) Rights commission urges action against police
151 GNLM (12 Sep 15) Detained students’ rights must be upheld: HR commission
152 Asia Justice and Rights, Kachin Women's Association Thailand, Karen Women Empowerment Group and Women Organizations Network of Myanmar (23 Sep 15) Opening the Box: Women’s Experiences of War, Peace, and Impunity in Myanmar
Women in conflict regularly experience a loss of their livelihoods and homes due to displacement, which in turn denies them opportunities, particularly access to education.

Women suffer health problems, including trauma-related mental health problems, but lack access to health care and receive no help from the regime.

Despite living through conflict and dealing with its consequences, women have little understanding or knowledge of the peace process, which leads to doubt and distrust.

On 21 September, women activists, under the slogan “No Women No Peace,” called for the inclusion of women in the peace process, and highlighted the need for women to become “actors of change” instead of being portrayed as “objects of suffering.”

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UN Secretary-General addresses the election, nationwide ceasefire and treatment of Rohingya

At the Partnership Group on Myanmar meeting in New York on 29 September, attended by Foreign Affairs Minister Wunna Maung Lwin, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressed three current issues in Burma/Myanmar: the challenges to free and fair elections, failings in the ceasefire talks and discrimination against Rohingya. The Secretary-General called Burma’s election a “milestone” on the road to democracy but highlighted numerous factors that risk undermining the credibility of the elections as well as democratic progress.

In his statement, the Secretary-General:

- Described the disqualification of Rohingya MPs from running in the election as “egregious” and the disenfranchisement of Rohingya and ethnic minorities as “deeply disappointing.”
- Called on the regime to ensure that those eligible to vote in 2010 retain their right to vote this year and said that the seizure of “white cards” is a step back for reforms.
- Called for improvements to freedom of expression, assembly and association and an end to arbitrary detention, arrest and actions against the media.
- Stated that the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) must be inclusive and guarantee the continued involvement of all those affected in proceeding negotiations.
- Called for the regime to guarantee that humanitarian organizations have access to conflict zones.
- Stated that he was “appalled” by the humanitarian conditions of Rohingya and Kaman Muslim communities, and emphasized that the regime’s failure to reinstate citizenship for the Rohingya has led to denial of their basic human rights.
- Criticized the passage of the four discriminatory “Race and Religious Protection” laws that may be used to target religious and ethnic minorities and worsen communal divides [see Extremist group celebrates discriminatory laws as first person charged].

ECONOMY

More lay-offs following new National Minimum Wage

On 1 September, the regime implemented a 3,600 kyat (US$2.80) daily minimum wage and urged employers to sign formal employment contracts with workers. Prior to implementation, it was reported that hundreds of workers had already been fired in Rangoon/Yangon’s Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone [see August 2015 Burma Bulletin]. On 21 September, the 196 workers laid off by Asia

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154 Myanmar Times (23 Sep 15) Anger as women kept ‘in the kitchen’ during peace process
155 UN (29 Sep 15) Secretary-General’s remarks at the meeting of the Partnership Group on Myanmar
156 UN (29 Sep 15) Secretary-General’s remarks at the meeting of the Partnership Group on Myanmar
157 Xinhua (01 Sep 15) Myanmar gov’t urges factory owners to follow new minimum wage; Myanmar Times (02 Sep 15) Ministry instructs employers to offer contracts
158 Irrawaddy (05 Sep 15) Garment Factories Downsize in Response to Minimum Wage
Rose factory on 26 August reportedly decided to file a lawsuit for reinstatement after an arbitration council only reinstated seven of them on 11 September.\(^{159}\)

The garment sector has continued to respond with lay-offs and cost cutting measures in September, including the withdrawal of free transport, food, and overtime salary.\(^{160}\) On 3 September it was reported that Permanent Representative of the Labor Ministry Myo Aung told the press that the regime is “in talks with factory owners” who are considering lay-offs as a response to the new minimum wage, and Federation of Trade Unions Myanmar Chair Aung Lin called for fired workers to be properly compensated.\(^{161}\) On 21 September, 700 workers at Han Jen textile factory in Rangoon’s Shwepyitha Industrial Zone began a protest against the reduction of worker’s benefits.\(^{162}\) The government has since announced that it will spend 26 million kyat (US$20,000) on housing in industrial zones.\(^{163}\)

**UN and NGO reports show illegal logging causing dangerous levels of deforestation**

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a report on 7 September listing Burma/Myanmar as having the world’s third largest annual deforestation, losing 546,000 hectares of forest each year.\(^{164}\) On 17 September, London-based Environmental Impact Agency (EIA) published a report linking the illegal logging trade between Burma and China to Burma’s rapid deforestation.\(^{165}\) The EIA emphasized the systemic corruption that allows mountains of timber to pass through the borders.\(^{166}\) On 9 September, the NGO Global Financial Integrity released a report estimating that “under-invoiced” timber exports from Burma to China and India in 2010 were worth US$199 million and US$40.9 million, respectively, though the real value of smuggled timber is likely much higher.\(^{167}\) Both Asian Development Bank specialist Peter Brimble and Red Cross flood operations manager Richard Casagrande have said they suspect a link between severe deforestation and the massive flooding that had affected over 1.6 million people in August [see August 2015 Burma Bulletin].\(^{168}\) Environmental Conservation and Forestry Minister Win Tun acknowledged that the illegal trade has “a catastrophic impact on the environment,” and on 24 September, the regime announced that Burma will cooperate with China to stop the illicit trade.\(^{169}\)

**OTHER BURMA/MYANMAR NEWS IN SEPTEMBER**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The family of Kachin villager Ung Sau Tu Ja, who was arrested by Tatmadaw LIB 250 on 19 June, say that he has been killed in custody, according to the testimony of another man arrested with him, and sends a letter to President Thein Sein and Commander-in-Chief Sen Gen Min Aung Hlaing demanding that authorities return his body.(^{170})</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The University Students’ Union and the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society launch the ‘Failed Law’ campaign in protest of the corrupt judicial system and use of criminal charges against students and political activists.(^{171})</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Aung San Suu Kyi launches her formal election campaign, issuing a video message asking the world to “help us by observing what happens before the elections, during the elections, and, crucially, after the elections.”(^{172})</td>
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<td>8, 10</td>
<td>It is reported that 5,688 specially-trained election police personnel will be deployed in</td>
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\(^{159}\) Myanmar Times (17 Sep 15) Worker representatives refuse to back council vote; Myanmar Times (25 Sep 15) Factory workers weary of the Arbitration Council

\(^{160}\) Myanmar Times (09 Sep 15) Lay-off workers demand jobs back ahead of labour hearing; GNLM (7 Sep 15) Unemployment unlikely to rise

\(^{161}\) EMG (03 Sep 15) Some factories consider lay-off after new minimum wage set

\(^{162}\) EMG (01 Oct 15) Han Jen workers demand restoration of pre-minimum wage privileges

\(^{163}\) GNLM (8 Sep 15) Sharing The Burden: Govt to spend K26 bn on industrial zone housing

\(^{164}\) FAO (7 Sep 15) Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015: How are the world’s forests changing?; Myanmar Times (11 Sep 15) Myanmar third-worst for deforestation rate, says UN

\(^{165}\) EIA (17 September) Organised Chaos: The illicit overland timber trade between Myanmar and China; AP (17 Sep 15) Report: Illegal Timber Trade From Myanmar To China Growing

\(^{166}\) EMG (15 Sep 15) Deforestation approaches point of no return

\(^{167}\) GFI (09 Sep 15) Flight Capital and Illicit Financial Flows to and from Myanmar: 1960-2013; Reuters (10 Sep 15) Billions lost in corruption: report

\(^{168}\) VO/ (24 Sep 15) Myanmar Floods Spark Concerns About Deforestation

\(^{169}\) GNLM (25 Sep 15) Illegal timber trade tarnishes national image: Union Minister

\(^{170}\) Irrawaddy (03 Sep 15) Family of Missing Kachin Man Claims He Was Killed by Army

\(^{171}\) EMG (10 Sep 15) Students and activists protest ‘failed law’ with t-shirt campaign

\(^{172}\) Reuters (08 Sep 15) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi calls for free and fair elections as campaign starts; AP (08 Sep 15) Myanmar’s Suu Kyi Opens Election Campaign on Facebook
Rangoon/Yangon Division – double the amount as the last election – as well as 4,510, 1,029, and 800 in Mandalay Division, Chin and Kachin States, respectively.\textsuperscript{173}

Construction Minister Kyaw Lwin and Thai Transport Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith sign a US$108 million agreement in Naypyidaw to build a second friendship bridge over the Moei River to improve access to and from the Maesot Special Economic Zone (SEZ).\textsuperscript{174}

The Election Commission (EC) sets up a dispute resolution committee headed by EC Chairman Tin Aye, other members include: Ministers, EC officials from state/divisional sub-commissions, and representatives from the ten largest political parties.\textsuperscript{175}

US President Barack Obama includes Burma/Myanmar in his annual determination of major drug producing and transit countries and states that the country has “failed demonstrably” in the last year to meet its international obligations to counter drug production and transit.\textsuperscript{176}

The first phase of the US$1.5 billion Thilawa SEZ opens for business despite concern from foreign investors at a Global Investment Forum in Naypyidaw about Burma/Myanmar’s internal conflict and lack of transparency.\textsuperscript{177}

Burma/Myanmar signs the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.\textsuperscript{178}

Three Rohingya women are raped near a detention camp for refugees in North Aceh Province, Indonesia, after they tried to escape, leading to unrest with 200 people storming outside of the camp.\textsuperscript{179}

*Please visit [www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php](http://www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php) to access Altsean-Burma’s full chronology database covering Burma-related events.*

REPORTS ON BURMA/MYANMAR RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER

“Flight Capital and Illicit Financial Flows to and from Myanmar: 1960-2013” Global Financial Integrity (GFI) [http://goo.gl/byuWYg](http://goo.gl/byuWYg)

“Ethnic Politics and the 2015 Elections in Myanmar” Transnational Institute (TNI) [https://goo.gl/lv3yJb](https://goo.gl/lv3yJb)

“Myanmar’s Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive” International Crisis Group (ICG) [http://goo.gl/rX0jVm](http://goo.gl/rX0jVm)

“Organised Chaos: The illicit overland timber trade between Myanmar and China” Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) [https://goo.gl/PVY07U](https://goo.gl/PVY07U)


“A regional approach towards refugees and asylum seekers in the Asia Pacific” Amnesty International (AI) [https://goo.gl/vFaayp](https://goo.gl/vFaayp)

“Deepening Democracy in Myanmar” Oxfam [https://goo.gl/OWHToX](https://goo.gl/OWHToX)


\textsuperscript{173} Xinhua (10 Sep 15) Myanmar to introduce security measures for election; Khonumthung (08 Sep 15) Special police forces 1029 will duty for Chin state election

\textsuperscript{174} Bangkok Post (10 Sep 15) 2nd Thai-Myanmar bridge signed

\textsuperscript{175} Myanmar Times (17 Sep 15) UEC forms dispute resolution committee

\textsuperscript{176} US State Dept (14 Sep 15) 2015 Presidential Determination for Major Drug Producing and Transit Countries; Asian Correspondent (18 Sep 15) Burma has ‘failed demonstrably’ to combat drug crime, says Obama

\textsuperscript{177} Xinhua (24 Sep 15) Opening of Myanmar’s first special economic zone marks new chapter of investment; EMG (22 Sep 15) Investors warn of Myanmar challenges

\textsuperscript{178} GNLM (30 Sep 15) Myanmar signs Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; UNICEF (29 Sep 15) UN applauds as Myanmar signs key protocol on children’s protection in armed conflict

\textsuperscript{179} AP (29 Sep 15) Alleged Rapes Spur Rohingya Upheaval in Indonesia Camp