

BURMA BULLETIN

XXXXXXXX A month-in-review of events in Burma XXXXXXXX

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

Issue 98

February 2015

- **Tatmadaw troops launch a major offensive against the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.**
- **The Tatmadaw offensive in Kokang Self-Administered Zone results in the regime declaring a state of emergency and displaces 40,000-50,000 civilians, who seek refuge in China. Two Myanmar Red Cross convoys are attacked during the conflict, sparking international condemnation.**
- **Tatmadaw troops continue attacks and civilian abuse in Kachin and Shan States.**
- **Four armed groups sign a preliminary peace agreement on Burma's 68th Union Day, excluding the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC).**
- **Students around the country protest against the National Education Law. Following negotiations, the regime pledges to amend the law according to student demands.**
- **The National Assembly approves the Population Control Bill, which threatens to restrict women's reproductive rights.**
- **Rohingya and other minorities will lose voting rights after President Thein Sein revokes their temporary ID cards. Regime authorities continue to commit abuses against Rohingya.**
- **A court in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township sentences 14 activists from Michaungkan Village to six months in prison each under Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law and Articles 143 and 341 of the Criminal Code.**

IN THIS ISSUE

KEY STORY

- 1 Kokang offensive
- 3 Red Cross convoys attacked
- 3 Clashes in Kachin, Shan
- 4 Civilian abuse in Kachin, Shan
- 4 Preliminary peace deal signed

INSIDE BURMA

- 5 Student protests, negotiations
- 6 Parliament's 12th session
- 6 Military spending proposed
- 6 Gen Aung San's 100th birthday

HUMAN RIGHTS

- 7 Temporary IDs revoked
- 7 Rohingya abuses
- 7 Arbitrary sentences
- 8 Press restricted
- 8 Monywa report

DISPLACEMENT

- 9 Burmese migrants

INTERNATIONAL

- 9 UNHCHR criticism

ECONOMY

- 9 Rangoon worker strike
- 10 Oil block exploration

10 OTHER BURMA NEWS

11 REPORTS

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KEY STORY

Tatmadaw launches attacks on Kokang, displaces 40,000-50,000

In February, Tatmadaw troops launched air strikes and ground attacks on the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State. This was the first such offensive since August 2009, when the Tatmadaw attacked the MNDAA and ousted its Chairman Peng Jiasheng.¹ [See *August 2009 Burma Bulletin*] The most recent attacks followed reports of Peng Jiasheng's return to the MNDAA after several years in China.²

¹ TIME (18 Feb 15) Thousands of Refugees Are Pouring Into China to Escape Fighting in Burma

² DVB (10 Feb 15) Kokang enlist allies' help in fight against Burma army; DVB (10 Feb 15) Reports of fighting in Kokang region

- **6 February:** Tatmadaw troops launched air strikes to support ground troops clashing with MNDA, Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Arakan Army joint forces in Laogai Township.³
- **9 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA and TNLA joint forces in Laogai Township.⁴
- **10 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed and launched air strikes against MNDA, TNLA, and Arakan Army joint forces in Laogai and Konkyan Townships.⁵
- **11 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed and launched air strikes against MNDA, TNLA, and Arakan Army joint forces in Laogai Township.⁶
- **13 February:** Tatmadaw troops launched airstrikes in Laogai against MNDA and TNLA joint forces.⁷
- **14 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces in Laogai Township, and seized weapons, ammunition, and recovered the bodies of 13 MNDA soldiers. They also captured eight MNDA soldiers who later died in custody.⁸
- **17 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA and TNLA joint forces in Laogai Township.⁹
- **19 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces three separate times, in Laogai Township.¹⁰
- **19 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces in Konkyan Township.¹¹
- **20 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces six separate times on the road between Konkyan and Laogai, and seized weapons, ammunition, and the bodies of two MNDA soldiers.¹²
- **21 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LID 11 and MOC 16 clashed with MNDA forces near Laogai Township.¹³
- **22 February:** Tatmadaw troops attacked MNDA forces and launched air strikes on the road between Konkyan and Laogai.¹⁴
- **23 February:** Tatmadaw troops attacked and launched air strikes against MNDA forces near Laogai Township.¹⁵
- **24 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces near Laogai Township, and seized stimulant tablets, weapons, and ammunition.¹⁶
- **25 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDA forces in Laogai Township.¹⁷

According to state-run media, the fighting resulted in the death of 72 MNDA soldiers and 54 Tatmadaw soldiers.¹⁸

On 17 February, President Thein Sein imposed a state of emergency in Kokang Self-Administered Zone.¹⁹ The state of emergency, which would be in effect for 90 days,²⁰ allowed the military to take

³ Kachinland News (06 Feb 15) Battles Rage Between Allied Ethnic Forces and Burmese Army in Lau Kai

⁴ RFA (10 Feb 15) Kokang Rebels And Military Troops Clash in Myanmar's Shan State; GNLM (10 Feb 15) Fighting breaks out between Tatmadaw, Kokang renegade troops; DVB (10 Feb 15) Kokang enlist allies' help in fight against Burma army; DVB (10 Feb 15) Reports of fighting in Kokang region; AP (11 Feb 15) Burma reports clashes between troops, Kokang ethnic rebels

⁵ Irrawaddy (10 Feb 15) Fighting Flares Between Burma Army, Kokang Rebels in Shan State; Myawady (11 Feb 15) Military columns hunt Kokang renegade troops; Mizzima News (11 Feb 15) Intense fighting continues in Shan State

⁶ Kachinland News (11 Feb 15) Fighting Rages As Ethnic Allied Forces Enter Laukai; Irrawaddy (11 Feb 15) Thousands Reportedly Cross Into China to Flee Fighting, Airstrikes in Shan State

⁷ AFP (14 Feb 15) Myanmar in fresh airstrikes against northern rebels; AFP (14 Feb 15) Myanmar in fresh airstrikes against northern rebels

⁸ AFP (15 Feb 15) Myanmar army kills a dozen ethnic rebels in firefight; AP (14 Feb 15) Myanmar troops recover bodies of 13 rebels in renewed clash; AFP (16 Feb 15) Death toll rises in Myanmar unrest, China warns of instability; DVB (16 Feb 15) Burma army claims 26 Kokang rebels killed

⁹ Myawady (19 Feb 15) Fighting continues between Tatmadaw personnel and Kokang renegade groups

¹⁰ Myawady (20 Feb 15) Government troops take offensive to secure main routes to Laukai

¹¹ Myawady (20 Feb 15) Fighting breaks out as government forces continue securing Laukai

¹² Myawady (22 Feb 15) Military columns still combating Kokang insurgents

¹³ Myawady (22 Feb 15) Military columns still combating Kokang insurgents; EMG (24 Feb 15) Clashes intensify in Laukai and Chinshwehaw

¹⁴ Myawady (23 Feb 15) Military columns capture temporary bases of Kokang insurgents

¹⁵ VOA (23 Feb 15) Myanmar, Rebels Exchange Fire, Accusations

¹⁶ VOA (24 Feb 15) Myanmar-Kokang Clashes Continue Near China Border; Myawady (26 Feb 15) Tatmadaw columns occupy a hill near mile post 23 on Laukai-Kongyan road; Myawady (25 Feb 15) Military columns seize arms and ammunition, stimulant tablets from Kokang insurgents

¹⁷ VOA (25 Feb 15) Kokang Attack Official's Home in Latest Myanmar Violence

¹⁸ Xinhua (23 Feb 15) Myanmar gov't forces claims capture of some Kokang army bases; Xinhua (26 Feb 15) Sporadic clashes continue in Myanmar Kokang region

¹⁹ Xinhua (17 Feb 15) Myanmar declares state of emergency in Kokang region over armed clashes; Reuters (17 Feb 15) Myanmar declares martial law in troubled Kokang region

²⁰ Xinhua (17 Feb 15) Myanmar declares state of emergency in Kokang region over armed clashes; Reuters (17 Feb 15) Myanmar declares martial law in troubled Kokang region

administrative control of the area. On 18 February, the regime refused an appeal from Peng Jiasheng for a ceasefire and talks.²¹

As of 23 February, the offensive had driven 40,000-50,000 refugees across the border into Yunnan Province, China.²² Another 4,500 displaced civilians sought shelter in Lashio, Shan State.²³ On 23 February, Laogai Township residents reported that Tatmadaw troops had killed over 100 Kokang civilians.²⁴ On the same day, unidentified assailants attacked an eight-vehicle convoy carrying 48 female inmates from Laogai Prison to Lashio, Shan State, injuring 44 prisoners and two others.²⁵

Regime Information Minister Ye Htut alleged that groups in China had provided arms, rations, and medical support to MNDAA forces, while China repeatedly denied involvement in the fighting.²⁶

Attacks on Red Cross convoys draw international condemnation

On 17 and 21 February, in the midst of the fighting in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, unidentified assailants attacked two Myanmar Red Cross convoys, injuring three Myanmar Red Cross volunteers, a journalist, and three others.²⁷

International actors including Amnesty International and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) condemned the attacks, saying they were a violation of international humanitarian law and could amount to war crimes.²⁸ UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Burma Renata Dessallien, the United States, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) called on all parties in the conflict to guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian staff.²⁹ Both the regime and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) denied responsibility for the attacks.³⁰

Tatmadaw continues attacks in Kachin, Shan States

Throughout February, Tatmadaw troops also continued to clash with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in Kachin and Shan States.

- **1 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LID 77 clashed with TNLA Battalion 773 forces in Namtu Township, Shan State.³¹
- **1 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 38 clashed with KIA Battalion 14 forces in Tanai Township, Kachin State.³²
- **1 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA forces in Mongmit Township, Shan State.³³
- **2 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA forces in Mongmit Township, Shan State.³⁴
- **2 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LID 66 seized a KIA post in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.³⁵

²¹ Irrawaddy (18 Feb 15) Burma Red Cross Condemns Convoy Attack, Rebels Deny Responsibility; AP (23 Feb 15) News Guide: Myanmar Troops, Ethnic Rebels in Fierce Fighting; Myanmar Times (20 Feb 15) Government rejects MNDAA offer for ceasefire negotiations

²² DVB (12 Feb 15) Tens of thousands flee war, airstrikes in Kokang region; VOA (18 Feb 15) Fighting Along Myanmar-China Border Strains Ties

²³ Irrawaddy (16 Feb 15) Thousands Displaced by Kokang Fighting Arrive in Lashio

²⁴ SHAN (23 Feb 15) Over one hundred Kokang civilians killed in fighting; RFA (25 Feb 15) Dozens of Civilian Bodies Cremated in Kokang; Rebels Blame Government

²⁵ DVB (24 Feb 15) Prisoner convoy ambushed in Kokang; Irrawaddy (24 Feb 15) Prisoners Injured During Prison Transfer in Kokang Conflict Zone

²⁶ RFA (26 Feb 15) Myanmar Says Kokang Rebels Getting Help from China's Side of Border; Xinhua (25 Feb 15) Interview: Diplomat denies Chinese involvement in conflict in northern Myanmar

²⁷ ICRC (23 Feb 15) Volunteers attacked while carrying out humanitarian work in Myanmar; Reuters (22 Feb 15) Red Cross says volunteer wounded in second attack on Myanmar convoy; Irrawaddy (22 Feb 15) Second Red Cross Convoy Attacked in Kokang

²⁸ DVB (19 Feb 15) Red Cross convoy attack 'may amount to war crimes': Amnesty; PHR (19 Feb 15) Attack on Myanmar Red Cross Violates International Law

²⁹ ICRC (18 Feb 15) International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement deplores attack in which Myanmar Red Cross volunteers were injured; UNIC (18 Feb 15) Statement by the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar, Ms. Renata Dessallien; US Embassy Rangoon (19 Feb 15) Statement

³⁰ VOA (18 Feb 15) Myanmar, Kokang Rebels Spar Over Red Cross Attack; DVB (24 Feb 15) Prisoner convoy ambushed in Kokang

³¹ SHAN (02 Feb 15) Namtu TNLA military and government fighting erupted

³² Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) KIA and TNLA Troops Battled Burmese Army in Kachin and Shan State

³³ EMG (05 Feb 15) Several killed in renewed Tatmadaw-TNLA clashes

³⁴ Irrawaddy (04 Feb 15) At Least 10 Dead After Army, TNLA Clash in Mongmit

³⁵ Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) KIA and TNLA Troops Battled Burmese Army in Kachin and Shan State

- **2 February:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA Battalion 8 forces in Namtu Township, Shan State.³⁶
- **2 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 223 clashed with TNLA Battalion 717 forces in Mongmit Township, Shan State.³⁷
- **3 February:** Three Tatmadaw helicopters attacked TNLA troops in Mongmit Township, Shan State, causing over 2,000 residents to flee to monasteries and into the jungle.³⁸
- **11 February:** Tatmadaw troops attacked the KIA headquarters on the outskirts of Laiza, Momauk Township, Kachin State.³⁹
- **12 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 389 fired mortar shells at the KIA headquarters in Laiza, Momauk Township, Kachin State.⁴⁰

Tatmadaw troops continue civilian abuse in Kachin and Shan States

In February, Tatmadaw troops continued to commit human rights violations against civilians in Kachin and Shan States.

- **1 February:** Tatmadaw troops mutilated the face, neck, and arms of a 16-year-old boy while interrogating him in Namtu Township, Shan State.⁴¹
- **3 February:** A Tatmadaw air strike on Pangdika Village, Mongmit Township, Shan State, killed two civilians, including a pregnant woman, and injured three others.⁴²
- **4 February:** Tatmadaw troops in Kutkai Township, Shan State, beat one civilian, abducted ten others and used them as human shields, and seized valuables while ransacking several homes.⁴³
- **19 February:** Two Lahu civilians were injured in a shootout between a Tatmadaw convoy and unidentified forces near Hsenwi, Shan State.⁴⁴

Four ethnic armed groups sign preliminary peace deal

After ethnic armed groups resisted regime efforts to pressure them into signing the nationwide ceasefire agreement on 12 February, Burma's 68th Union Day, President Thein Sein instead signed a preliminary peace agreement in Naypyidaw with representatives from the Karen National Union (KNU), the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLA Peace Council), and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S).⁴⁵

United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) members did not attend the ceremony after the regime refused to issue a joint invitation for the bloc.⁴⁶ Previously on 18 January, UNFC had proposed that the 12 February agreement should establish a federal union, including political guarantees for the ethnic groups.⁴⁷ However, the regime dismissed the proposal.⁴⁸

³⁶ Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) KIA and TNLA Troops Battled Burmese Army in Kachin and Shan State

³⁷ Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) KIA and TNLA Troops Battled Burmese Army in Kachin and Shan State

³⁸ Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) KIA and TNLA Troops Battled Burmese Army in Kachin and Shan State; AFP (05 Feb 15) Myanmar rebels accuse military of air strikes; DVB (06 Feb 15) Two dead, children injured in Palaung clashes, say NGOs; Myanmar Times (09 Feb 15) Thousands flee homes after Tatmadaw and TNLA clash

³⁹ VOA (17 Feb 15) Myanmar Army May Be Preparing for Kachin Offensive; Kachin News Group (18 Feb 15) Tensions between KIO and government high after army shelling

⁴⁰ Kachinland News (14 Feb 15) Burmese Army Shells KIA Positions on Union Day; Kachin News Group (18 Feb 15) Tensions between KIO and government high after army shelling

⁴¹ BNI (10 Feb 15) Burma Army Cut Youth with Knife during Interrogation

⁴² DVB (06 Feb 15) Two dead, children injured in Palaung clashes, say NGOs

⁴³ Kachinland News (04 Feb 15) Villagers Held Hostage, Homes Ransacked in Maw Han Village

⁴⁴ SHAN (25 Feb 15) Two villagers injured when Burma Army ambushed

⁴⁵ GNLM (13 Feb 15) President U Thein Sein meets armed ethnic groups, political parties; GNLM (13 Feb 15) Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation; SHAN (17 Feb 15) Four Ethnic Armed Groups Sign Commitment to Peace

⁴⁶ SHAN (11 Feb 15) When not wanting to embarrass causes embarrassment

⁴⁷ SHAN (28 Jan 15) UNFC leader: Call for signing on federalism made; EMG (31 Jan 15) UNFC calls for Union Day pact; Mizzima News (03 Feb 15) UNFC wants federal agreement signed on Union Day; Irrawaddy (03 Feb 15) Ethnic Bloc Calls for Agreement on Federalism to Mark Union Day; IMNA (02 Jan 15) UNFC offers Gov't agreement for the establishment of federal union on Union Day

⁴⁸ DVB (06 Feb 15) Govt-ethnic talks stall on federal union agreement

Student protests extract commitment to revise National Education Law

In February, as students marched across the country to demand changes to the National Education Law, the regime agreed to amend the law after negotiations with student leaders and education advocates.

On 1 February, representatives from the regime, the National Parliament, the National Network for Education Reform (NNER), and student groups met in Rangoon to discuss amendments to the National Education Law.⁵⁶ At the next scheduled meeting in Naypyidaw on 3 February, however, the regime abruptly postponed negotiations.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, student marches to Rangoon, which began in January [See *January 2015 Burma Bulletin*] from Mandalay and Tenasserim Divisions, continued to call for the regime to negotiate over changes to the law.⁵⁸ Additional protests took place around the country. [See box *National Education Law protests*]

On 11 February, negotiations resumed in Rangoon, where regime representatives agreed in principle to the students' 11 demands for changes to the National Education Law, including ensuring the freedom to form student unions, mother-tongue language instruction in ethnic areas, greater autonomy for universities, and the allocation of 20% of the national budget to education.⁵⁹ Following more negotiations on 14 and 15 February, the regime submitted to the National Parliament on 16 February a bill, drafted by the NNER, which would amend the National Education Law in accordance with the students' demands.⁶⁰

Students around the country subsequently suspended their marches, though those marching from Mandalay vowed to resume protests if Parliament did not approve the bill by 28 February.⁶¹

National Education Law protests

- **3 February:** Students from Mandalay resumed their march, and students from Bassein, Irrawaddy Division, began marching to Rangoon.⁴⁹
- **4 February:** More than 3,000 local residents in Kyaungon Township, Irrawaddy Division, greeted students marching from Bassein, Irrawaddy Division.⁵⁰
- **7 February:** At least 100 students from Monywa Township, Sagaing Division, and Pakokku Township, Magwe Division, began marching to Rangoon.⁵¹
- **8 February:** Several hundred people demonstrated in Rangoon in solidarity with students marching around the country.⁵²
- **8 February:** Around 15 students marching from Tavoy [Dawei] Township, Tenasserim Division, arrived in Moulmein Township, Mon State, where they held demonstrations with local students.⁵³
- **9 February:** Around 40 students, joined by dozens of local residents, protested in Mergui Township, Tenasserim Division.⁵⁴
- **10 February:** Students demonstrated in Myitkyina, Kachin State, in solidarity with students marching around the country.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Mizzima News (05 Feb 15) Students resume education protest after postponement of 4-party talks; DVB (03 Feb 15) Students vow action after govt delays talks

⁵⁰ DVB (05 Feb 15) Mandalay marchers make university stopover in Magwe

⁵¹ EMG (07 Feb 15) Pakokku students begin march on Yangon; EMG (08 Feb 15) Students march on Yangon in three columns

⁵² EMG (09 Feb 15) Public protest in support of students in Yangon

⁵³ IMNA (11 Feb 15) MNP welcomed student protest for amendment of national education law; DVB (09 Feb 15) Student protests: Thein Lwin suspended by NLD

⁵⁴ DVB (09 Feb 15) Student protests: Thein Lwin suspended by NLD

⁵⁵ DVB (10 Feb 15) EMG (10 Feb 15) Labour protest calls for union, salary raises

⁵⁶ GNLM (02 Feb 15) Talks on national education law starts in Yangon, with agreement reached on some points; DPA (01 Feb 15) Myanmar opens education reform talks

⁵⁷ DVB (03 Feb 15) Students vow action after govt delays talks; Irrawaddy (03 Feb 15) Govt Postpones Talks on Education Reform; RFA (03 Feb 15) Education Reformer Blasts Myanmar Government For Ending Talks With Students; VOA (03 Feb 15) Myanmar Postpones Meeting With Student Protesters; EMG (04 Feb 15) Student protest march continues after postponed four-party talk; GNLM (04 Feb 15) Press release on meeting on amendment of national education law

⁵⁸ DVB (05 Feb 15) Mandalay marchers make university stopover in Magwe; DVB (03 Feb 15) Students vow action after govt delays talks

⁵⁹ GNLM (12 Feb 15) Four-party talks result in agreements; AP (11 Feb 15) Myanmar Government and Students Agree on Points of Reform; RFA (11 Feb 15) Myanmar Government Concedes to Student Demands on Education Reform; DVB (11 Feb 15) Student protests: apparent breakthrough reached in Rangoon; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 15) Govt, Students Reach Agreement on Education Reform; EMG (11 Feb 15) Govt accepts students' demands in principle; VOA (11 Feb 15) Myanmar, Students Agree on Education Reforms

⁶⁰ GNLM (15 Feb 15) Four-party talks agree to finalize bill amending national education law; EMG (15 Feb 15) NNER's education amendment bill to be submitted to parliament; DVB (16 Feb 15) Nat Ed changes approved: students warned off Rangoon; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 15) Southern Student Protests Disband, as Mandalay Marchers Press Ahead

⁶¹ DVB (19 Feb 15) All student protests temporarily suspended; Irrawaddy (19 Feb 15) Marching Student Protestors Pause for Exams; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 15) Southern Student Protests Disband, as Mandalay Marchers Press Ahead

Parliament's 12th session continues

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

- **2 February:** The National Parliament approved, by a vote of 328 to 79 with 19 abstentions, a bill granting temporary ID card holders the right to vote in a planned referendum on constitutional amendments.⁶² [See below, *Thein Sein removes voting rights for temporary ID card holders*]
- **6 February:** The People's Assembly rejected, by a vote of 217 to 51 with 18 abstentions, a motion, proposed by NLD MP Phyo Min Thein, calling on the regime to take measures to ensure media freedom.⁶³
- **16 February:** The National Parliament issued a statement denouncing recent attacks by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Laogai Township, Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.⁶⁴
- **18 February:** The National Assembly approved, by a vote of 154 to 12 with four abstentions, 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.⁶⁵
- **19 February:** The People's Assembly rejected, by a vote of 186 to 125 with 19 abstentions, a motion urging the regime to prevent the eviction of people living along soon to be widened highways.⁶⁶
- **20 February:** The National Parliament approved, without objection, President Thein Sein's 17 February declaration of a state of emergency and martial law in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.⁶⁷

Military spending increases in 2015-16 proposed budget

On 27 February, the National Parliament concluded discussion the National Planning Bill for the 2015-16 fiscal year.⁶⁸ On 26 January, the regime proposed an overall budget increase of 20.42%.⁶⁹ This included a 5.36% increase in military spending from the 2014-15 fiscal year. In total, military expenditures represented 11.84% percent of the proposed budget.⁷⁰ By contrast, the regime proposed to allocate only 6.07% and 3.26% to education and healthcare respectively.⁷¹

Daw Suu addresses thousands at General Aung San birthday celebrations

On 13 February, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addressed a crowd of over 10,000 people gathered to commemorate the 100th birthday of her father, Burma's independence hero General Aung San in his birthplace, Natmauk Township, Magwe Division. The event was the culmination of a week of festivities.⁷² Later in the day, Daw Suu spoke to another large gathering in Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Division.⁷³

⁶² Irrawaddy (03 Feb 15) 'White Card' Holders Eligible to Vote on Constitutional Reform; Mizzima News (03 Feb 15) Parliament approves voting rights for white-card holders; Xinhua (03 Feb 15) Myanmar parliament adopts suffrage of white card holders

⁶³ GNLM (07 Feb 15) Strategic EIA to be conducted at hydropower dams on Thanlwin River; Mizzima News (09 Feb 15) Myanmar parliament defeats media freedom vote; EMG (07 Feb 15) Media freedom motion crushed

⁶⁴ GNLM (17 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw denounce attacks of Kokang renegades; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 15) Parliament Condemns Kokang Supporters in Northeast Burma; GNLM (17 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw condemn individuals and armed groups affiliated with Kokang renegades and honours the Tatmadaw

⁶⁵ Irrawaddy (20 Feb 15) Upper House Passes Controversial 'Population Control' Bill; DVB (19 Feb 15) Upper house approves population control bill

⁶⁶ GNLM (20 Feb 15) Pyithu Hluttaw goes on for 19th day; EMG (20 Feb 15) A proposal should not go against prescribed law: Shwe Mann

⁶⁷ GNLM (21 Feb 15) Parliament approves two bills, adopts resolution supporting two ordinances; EMG (21 Feb 15) Parliament declares state of emergency in Kokang

⁶⁸ GNLM (27 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses national planning bill; GNLM (28 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes discussions on national planning bill

⁶⁹ GNLM (27 Jan 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses 2015 Union Budget Bill; Irrawaddy (30 Jan 15) Govt Proposes 20% Budget Rise Boosting Education, Defense and Health

⁷⁰ Irrawaddy (30 Jan 15) Govt Proposes 20% Budget Rise Boosting Education, Defense and Health; Myanmar Times (30 Jan 15) Military proposes 5.5pc budget increase

⁷¹ Irrawaddy (30 Jan 15) Govt Proposes 20% Budget Rise Boosting Education, Defense and Health

⁷² AFP (13 Feb 15) Suu Kyi honours her father in Natmauk; Mizzima News (14 Feb 15) Remember Aung San every time you make an important decision: Daw Suu; EMG (14 Feb 15) Thousands flock to Aung San ceremony

⁷³ Irrawaddy (13 Feb 15) Suu Kyi Enchants in Father's Hometown, Marking Centennial of His Birth

HUMAN RIGHTS

Thein Sein removes voting rights for temporary ID card holders

On 2 February, the National Parliament approved, by a vote of 328 to 79 with 19 abstentions, a bill granting temporary ID card holders – which include many Muslim Rohingya – the right to vote in a planned referendum on constitutional amendments.⁷⁴ [See above, *Parliament's 12th session continues*]

Following a protest in Rangoon against the law's approval, on 11 February, President Thein Sein announced that all temporary ID cards would expire on 31 March, effectively overriding the granting of suffrage.⁷⁵ The following day, regime border police began seizing temporary ID cards from Rohingya in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.⁷⁶ For decades, temporary ID cards have been used to access public services and vote in elections. The expiration and seizure of such cards would deny holders the limited rights they enjoyed and place them at greater threat of arbitrary detention and expulsion.⁷⁷

On 16 February, the Constitutional Tribunal responded to a petition from National Assembly MPs requesting a ruling on the constitutionality of the law.⁷⁸ The Tribunal told Parliament that the clause granting suffrage to temporary ID card holders violated Articles 4, 38(a), and 391 of the 2008 constitution.⁷⁹

Discrimination and abuses against Rohingya continue

Regime authorities also continued to commit serious human rights violations against Rohingya, including harassment, arbitrary detention, and torture.

- **10 February:** Regime border police arbitrarily arrested and tortured a Rohingya man in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.⁸⁰
- **15 February:** Regime border police arbitrarily arrested four Rohingya in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.⁸¹
- **22 February:** A local official struck a Rohingya man after he refused to pay a bribe during a 'data collection' exercise in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.⁸²

In addition, high-ranking regime officials continued to make statements that fueled discrimination against Rohingya. On 3 February, the regime Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a press release rejecting the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee's use of the term "Rohingya" at a 16 January press conference.⁸³

More arbitrary arrests and sentences

In February, the regime continued punitive measures against human rights defenders.

⁷⁴ Irrawaddy (03 Feb 15) 'White Card' Holders Eligible to Vote on Constitutional Reform; Mizzima News (03 Feb 15) Parliament approves voting rights for white-card holders; EMG (04 Feb 15) Parliament allows white card holders vote

⁷⁵ GNLM (12 Feb 15) President Office issues notification on expiration of temporary identity cards; RFA (11 Feb 15) Hundreds Protest Rohingya Vote on Myanmar Charter Change; Reuters (11 Feb 15) Myanmar president enacts law allowing referendum on disputed constitution; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 15) Govt Revokes Voting Rights for 'White Card' Holders; AP (11 Feb 15) Myanmar Leader Voids Temporary ID Cards for Non-citizens; CNN (12 Feb 15) Myanmar gives Rohingya voting rights, backtracks immediately; Irrawaddy (12 Feb 15) Govt Revokes Voting Rights for 'White Card' Holders

⁷⁶ Kaladan News (14 Feb 15) BGP seizes white cards in Maungdaw

⁷⁷ Altsean-Burma (Feb 15) Field interviews

⁷⁸ GNLM (17 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw condemn individuals and armed groups affiliated with Kokang renegades and honours the Tatmadaw; DVB (06 Feb 15) MPS launch petition to oppose White Card-holder voting rights; EMG (07 Feb 15) MPs demand probe into immigrant vote; Irrawaddy (09 Feb 15) Opposition Asks Tribunal to Review 'White Card Holder' Referendum Vote

⁷⁹ GNLM (17 Feb 15) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw condemn individuals and armed groups affiliated with Kokang renegades and honours the Tatmadaw; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 15) Court Deems White Card Holders' Vote Unconstitutional, Sends Law Back to Parliament; EMG (17 Feb 15) 'Voting rights for white card holders contradicts charter'; Mizzima News (17 Feb 15) Constitutional Tribunal says 'white card' voting unconstitutional

⁸⁰ Kaladan News (10 Feb 15) BGP pick up Rohingya youth from market in Maungdaw

⁸¹ Kaladan News (15 Feb 15) Four Rohingya youths arrested in Maungdaw

⁸² Kaladan News (24 Feb 15) Village admin officer hits and hand- over to police for refusing to pay money in data collection program

⁸³ GNLM (04 Feb 15) Press Release; Reuters (04 Feb 15) Myanmar condemns U.N. official for using term 'Rohingya'

- **13 February:** A court in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, fined Brang Shawng 50,000 kyat (US\$50) for defamation under Article 211 of the Criminal Code after he filed a complaint with the regime Human Rights Commission that claimed his 14-year-old daughter was fatally shot by the Tatmadaw in September 2012.⁸⁴ To date, no investigation into his daughter's death has been conducted.
- **18 February:** A court in Rangoon's Kyauktada Township sentenced 14 activists, including 11 women, to six months in prison each under Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law and Articles 143 and 341 of the Criminal Code.⁸⁵ Authorities arrested them in December 2014 for protesting in front of Rangoon City Hall against the confiscation of their land in Michaungkan Village, Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division.⁸⁶ [See *December 2014 Burma Bulletin*]
- **26 February:** Police in Rangoon raided and destroyed a protest camp next to Maha Bandoola Park and arrested 14 activists for protesting against the confiscation of their land in Michaungkan Village, Thingangyun Township, Rangoon Division.⁸⁷ Kyauktada and Latha Township Courts charged the activists under Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law and Article 68 of the Municipal Act.⁸⁸ The 14 were released on bail later in the day.⁸⁹

Burma's press still restricted

In February, Burma's press freedom continued to deteriorate.

- **12 February:** Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) released its "2015 World Press Freedom Index," which ranked Burma 144th out of 180 countries surveyed, one place higher than its 2014 ranking.⁹⁰
- **13 February:** Special Branch police apprehended two Spanish photojournalists after they had met with student protesters on 12 February in Irrawaddy Division. On 14 February, immigration officials deported the photojournalists from Burma for covering student protests against the National Education Law in Irrawaddy Division while on tourist visas.⁹¹
- **28 February:** Police in Monywa, Sagaing Division, arrested and charged freelance photojournalist Aung Nay Myo under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for a satirical Facebook post that credited President Thein Sein and former SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe as the directors of a war film on a 1971 battle between Tatmadaw troops and Shan communist fighters.⁹² Aung Nay Myo could face up to seven years in prison if convicted.⁹³

Mining companies complicit in human rights abuse: Amnesty International

On 10 February, Amnesty International released its report "Open for Business? Corporate Crime and Abuses at Myanmar Copper Mine." The report documented how Canadian and Chinese mining firms financially benefited from serious human rights abuses including forced evictions and authorities' excessive use of force to quell protests against the Monywa copper mine projects in Sagaing Division.⁹⁴ The report also found that:

- Chinese company Wanbao was directly involved in forced evictions and colluded with regime authorities by providing bulldozers to destroy crops.
- Canadian company Ivanhoe Mines was involved, through its Monywa investment, in the sale of copper to the SPDC for more than a decade while economic sanctions were still in force.

On the same day as the report's release, regime police clashed with local protesters at the Letpadaung (Monywa) copper mine project site in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, when protesters tried to

⁸⁴ DVB (17 Feb 15) Brang Shawng found guilty of defamation; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 15) Kachin Man Accusing Army of Killing Daughter Found Guilty of Defamation

⁸⁵ DVB (18 Feb 15) Six month jail-time for 14 Michaungkan activists; AI (19 Feb 15) Prison Sentences for Peaceful Protesters

⁸⁶ DVB (23 Dec 14) Rangoon City Hall protestors forcibly evicted; Irrawaddy (23 Dec 14) Police Arrest 14, Dismantle Protest Camp at Rangoon City Hall

⁸⁷ Irrawaddy (27 Feb 15) Authorities Clear Remnants of Michaungkan Protest Downtown

⁸⁸ Mizzima News (27 Feb 15) Police demolish Michaungkan protest camp, make arrests

⁸⁹ EMG (27 Feb 15) Municipal police dismantle Michaungkan protest camp

⁹⁰ RSF (12 Feb 15) 2015 World Press Freedom Index

⁹¹ Irrawaddy (16 Feb 15) Foreign Journalists Deported After Covering Student Protests

⁹² AP (28 Feb 15) Myanmar Journalist Arrested for Satirical Post; AFP (28 Feb 15) Myanmar locks up satirist

⁹³ AFP (28 Feb 15) Myanmar locks up satirist

⁹⁴ AI (10 Feb 15) Myanmar: Foreign mining companies colluding in serious abuses and illegality

stop Wanbao bulldozers from entering land that had been confiscated for the project. At least nine people were injured as a result.⁹⁵

DISPLACEMENT

Burmese migrant workers face detention in Thailand

In February, Burmese migrant workers continued to face detention in Thailand.

- **1 February:** Thai police began a crackdown on undocumented Burmese migrant workers in Tak Province, in which they arrested more than 600 undocumented factory workers and caused many to flee back to Burma.⁹⁶
- **4 February:** Thai police rescued 28 trafficked Burmese migrant workers, including eight women, in Chumphon Province.⁹⁷
- **23 February:** Thai police in Chainat Province, detained 68 undocumented Burmese migrant workers, including 15 women and 23 children, after two Thai men had attempted to smuggle them from Burma.⁹⁸
- **24 February:** Thai police and soldiers in Ayutthaya Province, detained and charged 54 undocumented Burmese migrant workers, including 23 women and three children, suspected to have been trafficked, who were on their way from Chiang Rai Province to Bangkok.⁹⁹

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Burma “headed in the wrong direction”

On 25 February, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein issued a statement in which he warned that Burma seemed “headed in the wrong direction.” The statement voiced concern about the jailing of peaceful protesters and media workers, the continued persecution of Muslim Rohingya, and discriminatory laws targeting religious minorities.¹⁰⁰

ECONOMY

Police injure striking factory workers demanding higher pay

On 20 February, police arrested about 30 workers and injured several others while attempting to disperse a strike in Rangoon’s Shwepyithar Industrial Zone.¹⁰¹ The crackdown followed a series of strikes, which began on 28 January, of about 3,000 workers from five factories in Rangoon’s Shwepyithar and Hlaing Tharyar Townships, who were demanding higher pay and better working conditions.¹⁰²

Following negotiations that yielded pay increases, most workers had returned to their jobs by 26 February.¹⁰³ However, around 100 continued to protest, calling for further wage increases and the release of two protesters charged under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code and detained in Insein Prison.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁵ DVB (11 Feb 15) Latpadaung: slingshot fight leaves 9 villagers injured

⁹⁶ EMG (09 Feb 15) Myanmar migrant workers flee crackdown

⁹⁷ Bangkok Post (05 Feb 15) 28 migrants packed in ‘perilous’ pickup

⁹⁸ Bangkok Post (23 Feb 15) Two held for smuggling of 68 migrants

⁹⁹ Bangkok Post (24 Feb 15) 54 illegal Myanmar migrants nabbed

¹⁰⁰ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (25 Feb 15) Myanmar “needs urgently to get back on track” - Zeid

¹⁰¹ DVB (21 Feb 15) Police break up striking garment workers in Shwepyithar; Xinhua (21 Feb 15) Myanmar police takes legal action against month-long labor strike; VOA (24 Feb 15) Myanmar Warns Workers to End Strikes

¹⁰² EMG (11 Feb 15) Shwe Pyi Tha labour protest continues; Mizzima News (10 Feb 15) Yangon garment workers protest for better pay, conditions; DVB (09 Feb 15) Rangoon textile workers hit the streets; DVB (20 Feb 15) Sit-in held at Taiyi factory despite govt threats

¹⁰³ GNLM (27 Feb 15) Most striking workers return to work while some persist; Irrawaddy (25 Feb 15) Rangoon Labor Strike Continues on Small Scale Amid Rising Tension; VOA (24 Feb 15) Myanmar Warns Workers to End Strikes

¹⁰⁴ GNLM (27 Feb 15) Most striking workers return to work while some persist; Irrawaddy (25 Feb 15) Rangoon Labor Strike Continues on Small Scale Amid Rising Tension; RFA (24 Feb 15) Myanmar Garment Workers Threaten Further Strikes if Demands Are Not Met;

Offshore oil exploration underway

In February, the regime signed new contracts and granted several companies permits for exploration of offshore oil blocks:

- **5 February:** In Naypyidaw, state-owned Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) signed exploration and production sharing contracts with Royal Dutch Shell and its Japanese partner Mitsui Oil Exploration for three deep-water offshore blocks: AD9 and AD11 in the Bay of Bengal and MD5 in the Andaman Sea.¹⁰⁵
- **5 February:** It was reported that Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) had issued a permit for a joint venture between Norwegian company Statoil and US company ConocoPhillips to explore oil and natural gas at offshore block AD10 in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁰⁶
- **5 February:** It was reported that MIC had issued a permit for a joint venture between US company Chevron's subsidiary Unocal and Burmese company Royal Marine Engineering to explore oil and natural gas at offshore block A5 in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁰⁷
- **9 February:** It was reported that MOGE had issued a permit to UK company Ophir Energy to explore offshore block AD3 in the Bay of Bengal.¹⁰⁸

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN FEBRUARY

1	Police in Maymyo, Mandalay Division, charge five men under Articles 294 and 332 of the Criminal Code for obscenity and for deterring civil servants from their duties after a land confiscation dispute between the men and Tatmadaw soldiers on 27 January.
2	In his monthly radio address, President Thein Sein reiterates his opposition to six-party talks on constitutional amendments and calls on students to cease protests against the National Education Law.
2	Regime Home Affairs Minister Lt Gen Ko Ko announces that his ministry has brought the Special Branch police under its direct control.
3	Fortify Rights issues a press release calling on the regime to stop prosecuting and threatening journalists and human rights defenders for reporting on human rights abuses.
4	UK risk-assessment firm Maplecroft's Labor Costs Index finds that Burma has the cheapest labor in the world, and warns that while low cost labor markets are attractive, they may be offset by risks posed by poor working conditions, child labor, and trafficking.
6	At the end of a three-day visit to Akyab [Sittwe], Arakan State, Rangoon, and Naypyidaw, European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department Global Director of Operations Jean-Louis De Brouwer announces a €15 million (US\$17 million) donation to support people affected by conflict in Arakan, Kachin, and Shan States, including refugees in Thailand.
6	HRW and Amnesty International issue a joint statement calling on the new prisoners of conscience affairs committee to resolve the remaining cases of prisoners of conscience.
9	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Mro National Democracy Party.
10	ADB signs a US\$80 million loan agreement with the regime Finance Ministry to invest in road maintenance and repairs in the Irrawaddy Delta.
10	Ten CSO members of the EITI Board issue a statement saying urgent action is needed to ensure that civil society is able to speak freely about transparency and natural resource governance in line with EITI requirements.
11	IMF predicts that Burma's economic growth rate will drop to 7.8% at the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year due to slowed growth in the agricultural sector, and warns that raising public officials' wages could impact funds for health, education, and infrastructure.
12	In Naypyidaw, student leaders meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss their demanded changes to the National Education Law.
12	Indonesian police detain at least 16 undocumented Burmese migrants in Padang, West Sumatra, who were attempting to make the journey to Christmas Island, Australia.
15	Residents protest in 17 townships in Arakan State to demand that the regime officially remove the right of temporary ID card holders to vote in a planned referendum on constitutional amendments.
15	A landmine explosion kills a ten-year-old boy in Laogai, Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.

¹⁰⁵ GNLM (08 Feb 15) MOGE, two foreign oil companies sign production sharing contracts; Mizzima News (09 Feb 15) Shell and partner to dig deep in three offshore oil and gas fields

¹⁰⁶ EMG (05 Feb 15) MIC approves Unocal, Stat Oil and Conoco Phillips offshore projects in Rakhine

¹⁰⁷ EMG (05 Feb 15) MIC approves Unocal, Stat Oil and Conoco Phillips offshore projects in Rakhine

¹⁰⁸ Myanmar Times (09 Feb 15) Ophir to be the first offshore block winner to explore

16	In Rangoon, the regime Election Commission meets with representatives from 55 domestic CSOs and 11 INGOs to discuss proposed revisions to its code of conduct for election observers.
17	Human Rights Foundation of Monland releases its report, “Yearning to be Heard: Mon Farmers’ Continued Struggle for Acknowledgement and Protection of their Rights,” which identifies the absence of available legal avenues to protest land confiscation cases as the main causes of land conflict in Burma.
17	At a meeting with political parties in Rangoon, regime Election Commission agrees to extend the campaign period for the 2015 general election from 30 to 60 days.
17	In Naypyidaw, Finnish FM Erkki Tuomioja meets separately with President Thein Sein, National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann, and regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin.
17	Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB 533 forcibly recruit a 17-year-old Karenni boy in Rangoon’s North Dagon Township.
18	Amnesty International calls on the UNHRC to extend the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma for another year.
19	Fifty farmers protest in Kyaukpyu Township, Arakan State, to demand compensation for farmland that was destroyed by mud from the construction of the Kyaukpyu-Kunming oil and gas dual pipeline.
20	Ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking team chief negotiator Nai Hong Sar calls the 12 February agreement signed by four ethnic armed groups “meaningless” and says that the regime made the gesture to appease the international community.
23	PEN Myanmar issues a statement calling for talks between the interim Myanmar Press Council and the Tatmadaw to protect the legal rights of reporters covering clashes in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Shan State.
24	Patheingyi Township Court, Mandalay Division, sentences two Buddhist men to two years in prison and another 13 Buddhist men to one year in prison for destroying the Muslim section of Kyarnikan Cemetery in Maddaya Township, Mandalay Division, during July 2014 riots in Mandalay.
24	Local authorities in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships, Arakan State, ban prayer calls in mosques.
25	Amnesty International issues its “Report 2014/15: The State of the World’s Human Rights” in which it says discrimination, particularly against Muslim Rohingya, and freedom of expression were among the worst violations in Burma.
25	In Bangkok, Thai junta PM Prayuth Chan-ocha meets with Vice-President Mauk Kham.
26	Authorities in Tenasserim Township, Tenasserim Division, charge 14 villagers under Articles 294 and 447 of the Criminal Code after a clash between farmers and authorities over land that had been confiscated by developers for a palm oil plantation project.
26	MDCF members protest in front of Rangoon’s Correctional Department to demand the release of all political prisoners.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN FEBRUARY

“**Open for Business? Corporate Crime and Abuses at Myanmar Copper Mine**”, Amnesty International (AI) <http://goo.gl/fAFwMP>

“**Myanmar: Amnesty International Report 2014/15**”, Amnesty International (AI) <http://goo.gl/mNNBvY>

“**Yearning to be Heard: Mon Farmers’ Continued Struggle for Acknowledgement and Protection of their Rights**”, Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) <http://goo.gl/VGkwhK>

“**The Long Road to Recovery**”, Health Information System Working Group (HISWG) <http://goo.gl/YSujuK>

“**Monthly Chronology of Burma’s Political Prisoners for January 2015**”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) <http://goo.gl/FgNWAB>

“**Documentation Project Interim Report: February 2015**”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) & Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS) <http://goo.gl/5hyG7Z>

“**Ongoing Militarization of Southeastern Burma/Myanmar**”, Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) <http://goo.gl/GzaV7s>

“**The Challenge of Democratic and Inclusive Land Policymaking in Myanmar**”, Transnational Institute (TNI) <http://goo.gl/n9wVpi>

“**2015 World Press Freedom Index**”, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) <http://goo.gl/3M9S1z>

“**Legal and Regulatory Environment Risk Atlas 2015**”, Maplecroft <http://goo.gl/eEC5Ad>