

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 94

October 2014

- **The regime releases 3,073 prisoners, but only five are political prisoners. At least 75 political prisoners remain behind bars, with another 130 awaiting trial.**
- **Regime authorities sentence five media workers to two years in prison, the Tatmadaw kills a journalist covering conflict in Mon State, and local authorities suspend four ethnic Chin newspapers.**
- **Despite repeated requests for a cessation of hostilities, Tatmadaw attacks in Shan State intensify in October, causing the displacement of hundreds.**
- **Tatmadaw troops clash with the DKBA in Karen State for the second consecutive month, in violation of the 2012 bilateral ceasefire agreement.**
- **Parliamentary committees submit reports on proposed constitutional amendments and electoral systems.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee warns of “signs of possible backtracking.”**
- **Over 10,000 Rohingya flee by boat from Arakan State in the second half of October – double the number from the same period in 2013.**
- **US President Barack Obama urges President Thein Sein to revise the ‘Rakhine State Action Plan’ and protect the rights of Rohingya.**
- **Thai junta PM Prayuth Chan-ocha visits Burma in his first official foreign trip.**
- **At the Asia-Europe Meeting in Milan, Italy, President Thein Sein woos investment while urging the EU to stop submitting resolutions on Burma at the UN.**
- **Weak legal framework and threats against civil society continue to undermine Burma’s Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) candidacy.**

IN THIS ISSUE

KEY STORY

- 1 5 political prisoners freed
- 2 Activists, media workers jailed

INSIDE BURMA

- 2 Clashes in Shan State
- 3 Civilian abuse in Shan State
- 4 Clashes in Karen State
- 4 Parliament committee reports
- 5 Election announcements

HUMAN RIGHTS

- 5 Tatmadaw kills journalist
- 6 Newspapers suspended
- 6 Yanghee Lee’s report

DISPLACEMENT

- 7 Rohingya arrests abroad

INTERNATIONAL

- 7 Thai junta PM visits Burma
- 8 Thein Sein attends ASEM
- 8 Obama calls Thein Sein

ECONOMY

- 8 Oil & gas sector still opaque

OTHER BURMA NEWS

REPORTS

Receive the Burma Bulletin monthly!
email publications@altsean.org



KEY STORY

In October, despite a high-profile mass presidential amnesty, regime authorities sentenced more political prisoners.

Political prisoners: five released, at least 75 still in jail

On 7 October, just ahead of the 25th ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw, President Thein Sein granted a presidential amnesty to 3,073 prisoners.¹ As with previous strategically timed mass releases [See Table

¹ AP (07 Oct 14) Myanmar frees political prisoners; AFP (07 Oct 14) Myanmar frees 3,000 prisoners, including ex-military figures; GNLM (08 Oct 14) Over 3,000 prisoners released under amnesty by President

Most recent mass releases of prisoners], most were common criminals; only five (or 0.16%) were political prisoners.

Among those freed were Rohingya human rights defender Kyaw Hla Aung, imprisoned on trumped-up rioting charges,² and Kachin farmer La Ring, jailed under the Explosives Act and the Unlawful Association Act.³ However, at least 75 political prisoners remained behind bars, including Rohingya human rights defender Tun Aung and Michaungkan community leader Sein Than. In addition, 130 people still faced criminal charges over their political activities.⁴

Regime jails more activists, targets media

In October, the regime sentenced nine farmers and one activist to prison.

- **14 October:** Thaton District Court, Thaton Township, Mon State, sentenced nine farmers to seven years in prison each. Authorities charged them with trespassing and destruction of property after they attempted to weed out overgrowth on land confiscated from them in March in Ah Nan Pin Village, Thaton Township, Mon State.⁵
- **30 October:** Rangoon's Kyauktada Township Court sentenced Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF) leader Htin Kyaw to two years in prison under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code for a protest earlier in the year.⁶ This was his 14th sentence since 4 June. [See *July; August; September 2014 Burma Bulletin*]

The media were also targeted with prison sentences. On 16 October, Rangoon's Pabedan Township Court sentenced three Bi Mon Te Nay Journal employees (reporter Min Wathan and editors Win Tin and Aung Thant) and two publishers (Yin Min Htun and Kyaw Min Khine) to two years in prison each under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code. The sentences were the result of a July story in the journal which referenced a statement from activist group MDCF.⁷

In other media-related developments, the Tatmadaw killed a journalist in Mon State, and authorities suspended four ethnic media publications in Chin State. [See below, *Tatmadaw kills journalist in Mon State; Regime suspends publications in Chin State*]

INSIDE BURMA

Tatmadaw offensives intensify in Shan State

In October, Tatmadaw offensives intensified in Shan State, despite five informal meetings and four formal requests to Naypyidaw for the cessation of hostilities. The calls addressed to Naypyidaw were made by the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and Shan, Wa, and Kokang leaders. Throughout the month, Tatmadaw troops continued to attack the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).⁸

Thein Sein's prisoner releases		
Date	Total prisoners	Political prisoners
16 May 11	14,578	58
12 Oct 11	6,359	240
4 Jan 12	6,656	36
13 Jan 12	651	302
3 Jul 12	80	25
17 Sep 12	514	88
15 Nov 12	452	0
19 Nov 12	66	51
23 Apr 13	93	59
17 May 13	23	19
23 Jul 13	73	73
8 Oct 13	56	56
15 Nov 13	69	69
11 Dec 13	44	41
31 Dec 13	5	5
3 Jan 14	13,274	3
7 Oct 14	3,073	5
Total	46,066	1,130

Sources: NLM; AAPP

² Myanmar Times (09 Oct 14) Rohingya activist U Kyaw Hla Aung released; VOA (07 Oct 14) Myanmar Pardons 3,000 Prisoners
³ RFA (07 Oct 14) Few Political Prisoners Released in Latest Myanmar Amnesty; Irrawaddy (07 Oct 14) 2 Political Prisoners Among Thousands to Be Freed; DVB (09 Oct 14) Only one political prisoner released in amnesty: AAPP-B; Myanmar Times (09 Oct 14) Amnesty panned as MI officials, not political prisoners, walk free
⁴ AP (07 Oct 14) Myanmar freeing 3,073 prisoners in new amnesty
⁵ Irrawaddy (16 Oct 14) 9 Jailed for Farming Confiscated Land in Mon State
⁶ DVB (31 Oct 14) Activist to serve fourteen years behind bars
⁷ Myanmar Times (06 Oct 14) Bi Mon Te Nay staff to appeal two-year jail terms; Irrawaddy (16 Oct 14) Court Sentences 3 Journalists, 2 Media Owners to 2 Years in Prison; DVB (16 Oct 14) Journalists sentenced to 2 years for sedition; DPA (16 Oct 14) Myanmar jails 5 journalists for 2 yrs; RFA (16 Oct 14) Myanmar Sentences Five Reporters to Two-Year Jail Terms
⁸ SHAN (06 Oct 14) Peace: Harder to win than war; DVB (06 Oct 14) Shan groups pledge common vision at Bangkok meeting; DVB (02 Oct 14) Shan alliance talks on the agenda at Bangkok parlay; SHAN (10 Oct 14) Harder to win than war -Day 3; Kachin News Group (09 Oct 14) NCCT Meet About Disagreements with Government; Myanmar Times (09 Oct 14) Clashes could delay peace process, warns NCCT; DVB (06 Oct 14) Karen delegates hold closed-door talks with government; DVB (08 Oct 14) Wa, Mongla rebels say Burmese army undermining peace process; Myanmar Times (09 Oct 14) Clashes could delay peace process,

- **1 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LID 11 clashed with combined TNLA, KIA, and MNDAA forces in Kutkai Township, Shan State.⁹
- **1 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIDs 45 and 88 clashed with TNLA forces in Kutkai and Namkham Townships, Shan State.¹⁰
- **2 October:** Over 1,000 Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 247 and 248, and IBs 248 and 523 clashed seven times with SSA-N forces in different parts of Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹¹
- **3-6 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed at least 25 times with SSA-N forces in different parts of Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹²
- **6 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 217 and IB 221 clashed with KIA forces at Hka Lum in the Pangsai area of Muse Township, Shan State.¹³
- **8 October:** Tatmadaw troops from IB 290 clashed with KIA Battalion 9 forces in Kutkai Township, Shan State.¹⁴
- **13 October:** Tatmadaw troops used fighter jets and helicopters to launch several air strikes near SSA-N headquarters in Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹⁵
- **15 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with SSA-N forces near SSA-N headquarters in Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹⁶
- **15-16 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIDs 11, 55, and 99 clashed with KIA Battalions 2, 9, and 38, TNLA, and MNDAA forces in Kutkai Township, Shan State.¹⁷
- **20 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with TNLA forces in Nawng Khe Village, Nansang Township, Shan State.¹⁸

On 14 October, Tatmadaw troops from LID 66 ordered over 1,000 residents of three villages near Hpakant, Kachin State, to vacate their homes by 6pm, in anticipation of clashes with the KIA.¹⁹

Tatmadaw forces continue to attack civilians in Shan State

In October, Tatmadaw forces continued to target civilians with violence in Shan State.

- **3-4 October:** Tatmadaw troops shelled several villages in Kyethi Township, Shan State, killing two civilians and injuring at least one more.²⁰
- **12 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 326 and 523 detained seven women and girls for six days in a house in Kyethi Township, Shan State.²¹
- **12 October:** Tatmadaw troops arbitrarily detained, interrogated, and tortured three residents of Ngu Lein Village, Kyethi Township, Shan State, after accusing them of being Shan soldiers.²²
- **13 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 294 launched at least 20 mortar shells on Wanhai Village Tract, Kyethi Township, Shan State, destroying homes and livestock, and forcing 180 residents to flee.²³

warns NCCT; SHAN (10 Oct 14) UWSA and NDAA Issue Joint Statement About Fighting Between Government and SSPP/SSA Forces; UNFC (15 Oct 14) UNFC statement on government troops' attacks; RFA (15 Oct 14) Armed Ethnic Rebel Groups Call For Halt to Myanmar Military Offensive

⁹ Irrawaddy (01 Oct 14) Heavy Fighting in Shan State Kills 17 Govt Soldiers, Rebels Claim

¹⁰ Phophtaw News Association (06 Oct 14) Clashes break out between TNLA and government troops

¹¹ RFA (03 Oct 14) Government, Rebels Suffer Fatalities in Myanmar's Shan State Clashes; DVB (03 Oct 14) Burmese army launched 'unprovoked attack', say Shan rebels; Irrawaddy (03 Oct 14) Fighting in Central Shan State Reportedly Kills 5 Soldiers, 2 Rebels; DVB (06 Oct 14) Shan groups pledge common vision at Bangkok meeting

¹² SHAN (09 Oct 14) Government Artillery Shells Kill Two Civilians

¹³ FBR (27 Oct 14) Update on Burma Army Activity in Kachin State and Northern Shan State

¹⁴ FBR (27 Oct 14) Update on Burma Army Activity in Kachin State and Northern Shan State

¹⁵ SHAN (16 Oct 14) Villagers flee due to firing of over 20 mortar shells in Ke See township; SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

¹⁶ SHAN (16 Oct 14) Villagers flee due to firing of over 20 mortar shells in Ke See township

¹⁷ Irrawaddy (17 Oct 14) Fighting Escalates Between Gov't, Rebel Alliance in Shan State; Kachin News Group (25 Oct 14) Burma army clashes with KIO and its allies in Shan state

¹⁸ RFA (21 Oct 14) Clashes in Myanmar's Shan State Leave Two Government Soldiers Dead

¹⁹ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 14) Army Orders 1,000 Villagers to Leave, As Tensions Rise Near Hpakant; Kachinland News (16 Oct 14) Burmese Army Commander Warns of Imminent Attack, Civilians Flee; DVB (17 Oct 14) Kachin rebels, govt forces in standoff at Hpakant

²⁰ SHAN (09 Oct 14) Government Artillery Shells Kill Two Civilians; SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

²¹ SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

²² SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

- **14 October:** Tatmadaw troops arbitrarily detained and tortured two farmers from Kyethi Township, Shan State.²⁴

Clashes, civilian abuse continue in Karen State

In October, Tatmadaw troops continued to clash with the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) in Karen State.

- **1 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with DKBA forces in Kawkareik Township, Karen State.²⁵
- **10 October:** Tatmadaw troops from MOC 12 clashed with DKBA forces in separate incidents in Kawkareik and Hlaingbwe Townships, Karen State.²⁶
- **11 October:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 230 clashed with DKBA forces in Kawkareik Township, Karen State.²⁷

On 10 October, at least four mortar shells from nearby clashes between the Tatmadaw and the DKBA hit Pyar Bin Village, Kawkareik Township, Karen State.²⁸ On 11 October, the fighting between the Tatmadaw and the DKBA forced 260 residents to flee from Kawkareik Township, Karen State, to Thailand, where Thai authorities pushed them back to Burma.²⁹ The same day, a stray mortar shell hit a roadside stop on the Myawaddy-Kawkareik road, Karen State, killing four civilians and injuring at least nine others.³⁰

Committees for electoral systems, constitutional amendments report to Parliament

In October, two parliamentary committees submitted reports on potential changes to Burma's political system.

On 22 October, the 31-member parliamentary committee for constitutional amendments submitted its final report to the National Parliament.³¹ The report, which contained proposals from political parties, civil society, and the military, identified 210 articles of the 2008 constitution for Parliament to consider amending.³² Among these were Article 59(f), which bars Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming president, and Article 261(b), which gives the president authority to select chief ministers for all states and divisions.³³

The committee's report also noted that military MPs proposed amendments to strengthen the powers of the National Defense and Security Council (NDSC). In addition, the committee reported that military MPs firmly opposed any changes to Article 436, which gives the military effective veto power over any proposed constitutional amendments.³⁴ The military's opposition to amending Article 436 came after a May-July nationwide campaign for amendment by the NLD and 88 Generation Peace and Open Society

²³ SHAN (16 Oct 14) Villagers flee due to firing of over 20 mortar shells in Ke See township; SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

²⁴ SHRF (22 Oct 14) Burmese government troops again shell civilian area, commit other human rights abuses in Ke See township

²⁵ EMG (02 Oct 14) Further clashes in Kayin and Mon states spark panic

²⁶ KIC (10 Oct 14) DKBA and Burma Army Fighting spreads Throughout Karen State

²⁷ EMG (12 Oct 14) Four dead, ten injured after heavy weapon blast hit Dawna Range

²⁸ KIC (10 Oct 14) DKBA and Burma Army Fighting spreads Throughout Karen State

²⁹ EMG (12 Oct 14) Four dead, ten injured after heavy weapon blast hit Dawna Range; Salween Watch (13 Oct 14) New Burma Army offensive in Karen State linked to Salween dam plans

³⁰ KIC (12 Oct 14) Unknown Armed Group Kills Four And Wounds Nine Civilians; AFP (12 Oct 14) Four killed in blast in troubled Myanmar; EMG (12 Oct 14) Four dead, ten injured after heavy weapon blast hit Dawna Range; RFA (13 Oct 14) Four Civilians Killed in Artillery Attack in Myanmar's Kayin State; Irrawaddy (13 Oct 14) Four Civilians Killed in Myawaddy Shelling; DVB (13 Oct 14) DKBA denies responsibility for deadly mortar attack; IMNA (13 Oct 14) Artillery Mortar fired by Unknown Armed Group Kills 4, Injures Twelve

³¹ GNLM (23 Oct 14) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker urges representatives to debate constitutional amendment with positive attitude; DVB (23 Oct 14) Military MPs will not support changing 436; Myanmar Times (27 Oct 14) More than 100 MPs set to debate constitution report

³² GNLM (23 Oct 14) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker urges representatives to debate constitutional amendment with positive attitude; RFA (24 Oct 14) Myanmar Military's Refusal to Back Charter Reforms Threatens Peace Process; Myanmar Times (27 Oct 14) More than 100 MPs set to debate constitution report

³³ RFA (22 Oct 14) Myanmar's Military Lawmakers Refuse to Give up Veto Power; EMG (24 Oct 14) Chief ministers should not be selected by president, report says; EMG (23 Oct 14) Committee backs amending charter section barring Suu Kyi from presidency

³⁴ DVB (23 Oct 14) Military MPs will not support changing 436; Kyodo News (23 Oct 14) Myanmar keeps anti-Suu Kyi law; RFA (24 Oct 14) Myanmar Military's Refusal to Back Charter Reforms Threatens Peace Process; Myanmar Times (27 Oct 14) More than 100 MPs set to debate constitution report

where they gathered nearly five million signatures from across Burma.³⁵ [See *July 2014 Burma Bulletin*]

On 27 October, the People's Assembly commenced debate on the second report from its commission to review electoral systems.³⁶ The report outlined eight potential electoral systems for Burma, including the current first-past-the-post system, a proportional representation system, and six variations of a mixture between the two.³⁷

Regime Election Commission claims 2015 contests will be held on schedule

Following the 7 September cancellation of by-elections and President Thein Sein's 1 October speech, which insinuated that a nationwide ceasefire agreement was a necessary precondition for the 2015 general election, the regime Election Commission assured the public that elections would take place in 2015.³⁸ The commission held meetings in Rangoon on 20, 21, and 22 October with civil society organizations, political parties, and the interim Myanmar Press Council.³⁹

During a 20 October press conference following his meeting with civil society organizations, regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye announced that the 2015 general election would be held at the end of October or beginning of November 2015.⁴⁰ On 21 October, he told political parties that the campaign period would be extended from 30 to 60 days, but he refused to repeal rules requiring advance permission for campaign activities.⁴¹

HUMAN RIGHTS

Tatmadaw kills journalist in Mon State

In October, Tatmadaw soldiers killed Aung Kyaw Naing (also known as Par Gyi), a freelance journalist who was covering the conflict in Mon State, where fighting broke out in September.⁴²

On 23 October, in a letter to the interim Myanmar Press Council, the Tatmadaw said that their soldiers had detained Aung Kyaw Naing in Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State, on 30 September after he returned from covering an outbreak of heavy fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) in a DKBA-controlled area.⁴³ The letter went on to say that soldiers from LIB 208 had shot and killed Aung Kyaw Naing on 4 October after he allegedly tried to steal a gun from a soldier and escape.⁴⁴ However, his widow Than Dar believes he died while being tortured.⁴⁵

³⁵ AP (06 Aug 14) Nearly 5M sign up for changing Myanmar charter

³⁶ DVB (28 Oct 14) NLD rejects hybrid voting system; GNLM (28 Oct 14) Pyithu Hluttaw raised questions on safety of gas pipelines

³⁷ Myanmar Times (24 Oct 14) Electoral reform body submits second report; DVB (28 Oct 14) NLD rejects hybrid voting system

³⁸ GNLM (01 Oct 14) Myanmar always opposes terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; Irrawaddy (02 Oct 14) President Criticized After Saying Ceasefire Necessary for Successful Elections; DVB (02 Oct 14) President's speech raises eyebrows, ire

³⁹ GNLM (21 Oct 14) CSOs need to be free from party bias in 2015-general election: UEC Chairman; GNLM (22 Oct 14) Union Election Commission holds coordination meeting with political parties; GNLM (23 Oct 14) UEC meets Myanmar Press Council (Interim)

⁴⁰ GNLM (21 Oct 14) CSOs need to be free from party bias in 2015-general election: UEC Chairman; VOA (20 Oct 14) Myanmar Announces General Elections for Late Next Year; Mizzima News (21 Oct 14) Union Election Commission chairman says 2015 elections will not be postponed; Irrawaddy (21 Oct 14) Burma General Elections Scheduled in Late 2015: Election Official; IMNA (24 Oct 14) 2015 Elections to be Held in Late October

⁴¹ Mizzima News (23 Oct 14) Election commission extends canvassing period to two months; Myanmar Times (24 Oct 14) UEC extends campaign period but no let-up on event restrictions

⁴² Irrawaddy (24 Oct 14) Missing Reporter Killed in Custody of Burma Army: Report

⁴³ Irrawaddy (21 Oct 14) Army Detains Journalist Who Covered Fighting With Rebels, Wife Alleges; Irrawaddy (24 Oct 14) Missing Reporter Killed in Custody of Burma Army: Report; Irrawaddy (27 Oct 14) Police Open Investigation Into Journalist's Killing, Wife Says

⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (24 Oct 14) Demonstration to Call for Investigation Into Journalist's Killing

⁴⁵ Reuters (29 Oct 14) Myanmar activists demand independent probe into journalist's killing

Regime suspends publications in Chin State

In October, Chin State authorities suspended the publication of several Chin newspapers.

- **2 October:** It was reported that Chin language newspaper The Hakha Post had shut down its operations on 29 September after Chin State authorities ordered it to stop publishing until it received official registration.⁴⁶
- **15 October:** Chin State authorities sent a notification to Chin language newspaper Falam Post, ordering it to cease publication as it was not yet officially registered.⁴⁷
- **16 October:** Chin State authorities sent a notification to Chin language newspapers Tedim Post and Zo Lengthe to cease publication as they were not yet officially registered.⁴⁸

The sudden restrictions on Chin media in October coincided with new imprisonments of media workers in Rangoon and the Tatmadaw's extrajudicial killing of a journalist in Mon State. [See above, *Regime jails more activists, targets media; Tatmadaw kills journalist in Mon State*]

UN Special Rapporteur, UN Sec-Gen raise concerns

On 28 October, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Yanghee Lee presented her periodic report to the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.⁴⁹ Lee's report warned of "signs of possible backtracking."⁵⁰ The report highlighted the following concerns:⁵¹

- The continued application of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law and other outdated legislation, such as the 1923 Official Secrets Act and the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, to restrict the activities of civil society and the media.
- The spread of hate speech and incitement to violence, discrimination, and hostility in the media and on the Internet which have fuelled and triggered communal violence.
- Ongoing conflict in Kachin and Shan States which has resulted in the continued displacement of civilian populations.
- Tatmadaw soldiers' in ethnic conflict areas continued perpetration of serious human rights violations, including attacks on civilians, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, and torture.
- Institutionalized discrimination against Christians in administrative procedures in Chin State and allegations of arbitrary arrest, detention, ill-treatment, and torture of church workers and missionaries.
- Persistent reports on the use of torture during interrogations and the continued detention of political prisoners throughout Burma.
- Systematic discrimination and persecution against Rohingya, including restrictions on freedom of movement, marriage and birth registrations, and access to land, food, water, education, and healthcare.
- The regime's 'Rakhine State Action Plan,' which would likely result in permanent segregation of Rakhine and Rohingya communities in Arakan State.
- Burma's 1982 Citizenship Law, which fails to comply with international law, and its inclusion of different classes of citizenship, suggesting a form of second-class citizenship.
- The Parliament's 'National Race and Religion Protection' legislative package, which fails to comply with international treaties and includes four draft bills on interfaith marriage, religious conversion, polygamy, and population control.
- Ongoing land rights issues, including land confiscation and forced eviction.

⁴⁶ Khonumthung News (02 Oct 14) Authorities stop publication of 'The Hakha Post'; Irrawaddy (02 Oct 14) Chin State Govt Shatters Local Newspaper

⁴⁷ Khonumthung News (18 Oct 14) Second Chin Language Newspaper Banned by State Government; Irrawaddy (21 Oct 14) Second Ethnic Newspaper Shuttered by Chin State Govt

⁴⁸ Khonumthung News (24 Oct 14) Chin state bans two more newspapers; Irrawaddy (27 Oct 14) Two More Chin Newspapers Shut Down

⁴⁹ UN (28 Oct 14) 'Shrinking' Spaces for Citizens Threatened Democracy, Human Rights, Experts Tell Third Committee as It Considers Country Reports

⁵⁰ UNGA, 69th Session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; 23 September 2014; UN Doc. A/69/398

⁵¹ UNGA, 69th Session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; 23 September 2014; UN Doc. A/69/398

In October, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon submitted his annual report on Burma to the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.⁵² In it, he expressed alarm at inter-communal violence in Arakan State and other parts of the country and criticized the regime for its inadequate response.⁵³ He also voiced concerns over election campaign restrictions, civilian casualties in Kachin and Shan States, problems associated with the 2014 nationwide census, and "intolerable" conditions in IDP camps.⁵⁴ [See *May 2014 Burma Bulletin* for more on election campaign rules; See *March 2014 Burma Bulletin* for more on the nationwide census.]

DISPLACEMENT

More Rohingya arrests abroad

In October, authorities continued to arrest Rohingya abroad.

- **11 October:** Thai authorities arrested at least 15 Rohingya on a plantation in Phang Nga Province, Thailand, who said they had been living in a refugee camp in Bangladesh and had been kidnapped and trafficked to Malaysia before being sent to Thailand.⁵⁵
- **21 October:** Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel arrested 14 Rohingya in two separate incidents in Teknaf, Bangladesh.⁵⁶
- **27 October:** BGB personnel arrested nine Rohingya in Teknaf, Bangladesh.⁵⁷
- **29 October:** BGB personnel arrested 34 Rohingya in three separate incidents in Teknaf, Bangladesh, and pushed them back to Burma.⁵⁸

Despite the ongoing risk of arrest in other countries, the rate of Rohingya leaving Arakan State reached "unprecedented" levels in October due to persecution in the state. On 24 October, the Arakan Project said that since 15 October, an average of 900 people per day had fled from Arakan State by boat, totaling 10,000 in two weeks – nearly double that of the same period in 2013.⁵⁹

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Thai junta PM visits Burma

On 9 October, a delegation led by Thai junta PM Prayuth Chan-ocha arrived in Burma for a two-day visit.⁶⁰ The trip was Prayuth's first since assuming power in a 22 May coup.⁶¹ On the first day of the trip, Prayuth met with President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw, where the two discussed bilateral trade, efforts to jumpstart the stalled Tavoy [Dawei] SEZ project, and issues related to Burmese migrant workers in Thailand.⁶² Visiting Thai junta FM Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn also met separately with regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin and Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing.⁶³

⁵² Reuters (02 Oct 14) UN concerned about Myanmar's ethnic, religious tensions; Myanmar Times (02 Oct 14) Govt failed to ensure justice after riots: UN chief

⁵³ UNGA, 69th Session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the Secretary-General; 29 August 2014; UN Doc. A/69/362

⁵⁴ UNGA, 69th Session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar - Report of the Secretary-General; 29 August 2014; UN Doc. A/69/362

⁵⁵ AFP (13 Oct 14) Rohingya victims 'trafficked to Thailand; Reuters (14 Oct 14) More Bangladeshis Found in Thailand on Human Trafficking Route; Phuketwan (11 Oct 14) UPDATE Arrested Rohingya North of Phuket Guarded by Volunteers in Thailand Human Trafficking Bust

⁵⁶ Kaladan News (22 Oct 14) 14-Rohingya arrested at Bangladesh-Burma border

⁵⁷ Kaladan News (30 Oct 14) BGB arrest 43-Rohingya at Bangladesh-Burma border

⁵⁸ Kaladan News (30 Oct 14) BGB arrest 43-Rohingya at Bangladesh-Burma border

⁵⁹ AP (25 Oct 14) Number of Rohingya fleeing Myanmar tops 100,000; AFP (27 Oct 14) Rohingya flee Myanmar en masse

⁶⁰ GNLM (10 Oct 14) Thai Prime Minister and wife arrive in Nay Pyi Taw

⁶¹ AFP (09 Oct 14) Thai PM in Myanmar for first overseas foray; Xinhua (09 Oct 14) Thai PM arrives in Myanmar on first official visit

⁶² Bangkok Post (09 Oct 14) Thailand, Myanmar renew Dawei push; GNLM (10 Oct 14) President U Thein Sein warmly welcomes Thai Prime Minister; EMG (12 Oct 14) No meeting with Myanmar opposition leader for Thai PM; DVB (10 Oct 14) Burma's military leader calls for justice in Koh Tao murder case

⁶³ Myawady (10 Oct 14) Commander-in-Chief receives Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand; GNLM (10 Oct 14) Myanmar, Thailand to promote bilateral relations; DVB (10 Oct 14) Burma's military leader calls for justice in Koh Tao murder case

On both days of the visit, protesters in Rangoon demonstrated against the arrest of two Burmese migrant workers accused of killing two British tourists in Koh Tao, Surat Thani Province, Thailand.⁶⁴ In addition, on 9 October, the Dawei Development Association (DDA) issued a press release calling on the regime and the Thai junta to ensure that complaints from local residents were resolved before resuming work on the Tavoy SEZ.⁶⁵

Thein Sein calls for EU to invest, ignore human rights issues in Burma

On 16 October, President Thein Sein arrived in Milan, Italy, to attend the 10th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).⁶⁶ The following day, he addressed Asian and European leaders in attendance and called for the EU to stop submitting its annual resolution on the human rights situation in Burma to the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.⁶⁷ He made a similar request in a subsequent private meeting with Finnish PM Alexander Stubb.⁶⁸

While in Italy, Thein Sein also sought to promote investment in Burma. At the meeting, he invited European governments to invest in development projects, particularly the Tavoy [Dawei] and Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zones (SEZ), and met with Italian business leaders.⁶⁹

President Obama demands changes to 'Rakhine State Action Plan'

On 30 October, in advance of his planned trip to Burma in November, US President Barack Obama spoke by phone with President Thein Sein.⁷⁰ He urged the regime to revise the 'Rakhine State Action Plan' and take other measures to safeguard the rights of Rohingya in Arakan State.⁷¹ The 'Rakhine State Action Plan,' which the regime claimed would restore stability and development in Arakan State, calls for the indefinite internment of most Rohingya. [See *September 2014 Burma Bulletin*] The same day, President Obama also spoke by phone with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁷²

ECONOMY

EITI meetings highlight problems with natural resource transparency

From 14-17 October, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) held its board meeting in Naypyidaw.⁷³ The meeting drew attention to several problems with Burma's EITI candidacy, including inadequate systems for reporting and data collection, a weak legal framework in the extractives sector, and a lack of dialogue with civil society on the environmental impacts of oil and gas operations.⁷⁴

Ahead of the meeting, from 11-13 October, EITI held a workshop in Rangoon for civil society representatives, who said that the regime had not allowed them to participate freely in EITI implementation.⁷⁵ Some attendees said they had been threatened by local authorities and company employees while attempting to conduct field studies at resource extraction sites or educate community members about EITI standards.⁷⁶

⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (10 Oct 14) Smattering of Rangoon Protesters Greet Thai PM Over Koh Tao Murder Case; EMG (10 Oct 14) Thai junta leader greeted by protest in Yangon

⁶⁵ Myanmar Times (13 Oct 14) Civil society group calls for freeze on Dawei economic zone; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 14) NGOs Urge Burma, Thailand to Resolve Dawei SEZ Land Rights Complaints

⁶⁶ GNLM (17 Oct 14) President U Thein Sein arrives in Milan

⁶⁷ GNLM (18 Oct 14) President U Thein Sein urges EU to end submission of reports on human rights situation in Myanmar at UN General Assembly; Mizzima News (20 Oct 14) Rights activists criticize president's request not to submit rights report

⁶⁸ GNLM (17 Oct 14) President U Thein Sein meets Prime Ministers of Finland, Sweden, Vietnam, Norway

⁶⁹ GNLM (18 Oct 14) Myanmar President urges Asia and Europe to emphasize stronger monetary and investment regulations; GNLM (20 Oct 14) President U Thein Sein meets leading business executives in Turin - Support for social economic lives of Myanmar means encouraging democratization process of the country

⁷⁰ White House (30 Oct 14) Readout of the President's Call to President Thein Sein of Burma; Reuters (30 Oct 14) Obama speaks to Myanmar president, opposition leader Suu Kyi

⁷¹ White House (30 Oct 14) Readout of the President's Call to President Thein Sein of Burma

⁷² White House (30 Oct 14) Readout of the President's Call to Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma; Reuters (30 Oct 14) Obama speaks to Myanmar president, opposition leader Suu Kyi

⁷³ EITI (15 Oct 14) EITI Myanmar week – day three; EITI (17 Oct 14) EITI in Myanmar – day five

⁷⁴ EITI (16 Oct 14) EITI Myanmar week – day four; EITI (17 Oct 14) EITI in Myanmar – day five

⁷⁵ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 14) Civil Society Makes Demands in Lead-up to Resource Transparency Conference

⁷⁶ Myanmar Times (22 Oct 14) EITI bodies to be expanded to four states, regions; Irrawaddy (14 Oct 14) Civil Society Makes Demands in Lead-up to Resource Transparency Conference; EMG (15 Oct 14) Local CSOs threatened in their way to EITI

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN OCTOBER

1	The Central Bank of Myanmar announces the nine banks that are approved to operate in Burma: Australia's ANZ Bank, Thailand's Bangkok Bank, Japan's Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, Mizuho Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui, China's Industrial and Commercial Bank, Malaysia's Maybank, and Singapore's OCBC and UOB.
1	State-run newspaper Global New Light of Myanmar announces that the regime Information Ministry will take legal action against Eleven Media Group for the publication of an article accusing the ministry of misusing public revenue.
1	Construction begins on the second phase of Rangoon's Thilawa SEZ.
2	On appeal, the Magwe Divisional Court, Magwe Division, reduces the ten-year sentences of the five Unity Weekly media workers to seven years in prison with hard labor.
3	HRW issues a statement criticizing the regime's 'Rakhine State Action Plan' which could lead to the forced internment of over 130,000 Rohingya into closed camps.
3	Regime border police in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest and torture a Rohingya man for his alleged links to the Rohingya Solidarity Organization.
3	The 16 th ASEAN Intergovernmental Human Rights Commission Meeting begins in Rangoon.
8	National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann speaks at the 8 th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting in Rome, Italy.
8	Kachin Women's Association Thailand releases its report, "Silent Offensive: How Burma Army strategies are fuelling the Kachin drug crisis," which says that the Tatmadaw is allowing border militias in Kachin and Shan States to grow opium in exchange for support in assaults on the KIO/KIA.
8	Over 30 protestors at the Michaungkan protest camp in Rangoon's Maha Bandoola Park begin a hunger strike to mark 200 days of their protest against land confiscation.
9	In Naypyidaw, regime Electric Power Ministry signs an MoU with Thai power companies Ratchaburi Electricity Generating and Blue Energy and Environment and Burmese companies Vantage and Kyaw Kyaw Phyto to begin work on a 2,640 megawatt coal power plant in Mergui Township, Tenasserim Division, worth 5.3 trillion kyat (US\$5.2 billion).
10	Regime border guard police in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest and torture five Rohingya students and four Rohingya villagers for alleged links to the Rohingya Solidarity Organization.
13	One hundred and twenty-five CSO representatives and village and religious leaders in Tenasserim Division send a petition to Tenasserim Division Chief Minister Myat Ko and the KNU's Tenasserim offices, urging them to halt development projects and stop granting land concessions in Tenasserim Division.
13	Burmese NGO Salween Watch releases a statement asserting that recent Tatmadaw clashes in Karen State are linked to plans to clear the area for the proposed Hat Gyi dam, and urges the regime to put large-scale development projects on hold until Burma has genuine peace and democracy.
13	Regime border guard police in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest and torture four Rohingya villagers, including an 11-year-old boy, for alleged links to the Rohingya Solidarity Organization.
14	A court in Mandalay Division sentences four Buddhist men to ten years in prison with hard labor for the murder of a Muslim man during the July anti-Muslim riots in Mandalay.
14	In Naypyidaw, members of the interim Myanmar Press Council meet with Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who assigns three military officials as Tatmadaw media liaisons.
14	In Washington, DC, the World Bank approves a 101 billion kyat (US\$100 million) loan for improving access to maternal, infant, and child healthcare throughout Burma.
14	The National Assembly approves the Television and Broadcasting Bill, which outlines regulations on commercial television stations, establishes a public service television station, and forms a council to govern broadcasters.
15	Yinmabin District Court, Sagaing Division, releases ABFSU member Phyu Hnin Htwe from Monywa prison after China's Wanbao mining company drops kidnapping charges against her.
16	In Naypyidaw, regime Electric Power Ministry signs an MoU with Thai company Green Earth Power to develop a 220 megawatt solar power plant in Minbu Township, Magwe Division.
17	Following a forum in Rangoon on Burma's political transition, 650 civil society representatives issue a statement criticizing the transition process for excluding opposition actors, ethnic groups, and civil society.
17	Myanmar Investment Commission announces plans for a 1,000 acre, 143 billion kyat (US\$142 million) SEZ near Htin Par Keng Village, Laogai Township, in Kokang Region, Shan State Special Region 1, which Kokang authorities and Burmese company Kokant Mar Li Par will jointly implement.
20	Five regime ministries, with support from UNICEF and the EU, launch a birth registration project in the towns of Magwe, Magwe Division, Moulmein, Mon State, and Haka, Chin State, targeting an estimated 1.6 million unregistered children under five years of age.
21	In Bangkok, Thailand, members of NGO Dawei Development Association meet with Thailand's National

	Human Rights Commission to submit their report on the negative impacts of the Tavoy SEZ, asserting that affected families were given little to no information about SEZ development and were not fairly compensated for confiscated land.
22	International Crisis Group releases its report, “Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State,” which warns that recent developments such as the ‘Rakhine State Action Plan’ will marginalize the Rohingya, entrench segregation, and exacerbate inter-communal tensions.
24	Sandoway [Thandwe] District Court, Arakan State, sentences seven Buddhist men to seven years in jail over the killing of ten Muslims in an attack on a bus in June 2012.
24	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Kayin National Party.
25	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the New Society Democratic Party.
25	In Rangoon, around 3,000 people participate in a protest organized by the Rangoon branch of the Organization for the Protection of National Race and Religion, calling for the approval of the Interfaith Marriage Bill.
26	Around 1,000 protesters gather in downtown Rangoon to demand a full investigation into the death of freelance reporter Aung Kyaw Naing who was killed in Tatmadaw custody on 4 October.
27	During a debate in the People’s Assembly, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that a referendum should be held to gauge public support for various electoral system proposals.
28	One hundred and twenty-four civil society organizations release a statement urging the regime to investigate the enforced disappearance of Sumlut Roi Ja, who was abducted by the Tatmadaw on 28 October 2011.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN OCTOBER

“**Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar**”, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon <http://bit.ly/1wj53gR>

“**Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar**”, Yanghee Lee <http://bit.ly/1pnfR64>

“**Monthly Chronology of Burma’s Political Prisoners for September 2014**”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) <http://bit.ly/1t1bcJa>

“**Silent Offensive: How Burma Army strategies are fuelling the Kachin drug crisis**”, Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT) <http://bit.ly/1ri9L6x>

“**The shell starts to crack?**”, Global Witness <http://bit.ly/1sySD2R>

“**Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State**”, International Crisis Group (ICG) <http://bit.ly/1FB87rG>

“**Voices from the Ground: Concerns over the Dawei Special Economic Zone and Related Projects**”, Dawei Development Association (DDA), Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), Paung Ku <http://bit.ly/1nBNS76>

“**Myanmar: Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue: 1 to 30 September**”, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) <http://bit.ly/12omz6Y>

“**Equal Only in Name – Malaysia**”, Equal Rights Trust (ERT), Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP) <http://bit.ly/1t7WOSC>

“**Equal Only in Name – Thailand**”, Equal Rights Trust (ERT), Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP) <http://bit.ly/1tpcTmT>

“**Myanmar: Regressed, Stalled, or Moving Forward?**”, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) <http://bit.ly/1z3e6nm>

“**Tension, Discord and Insecurity: The State of Burma/Myanmar’s Peace Process**”, Burma Partnership <http://bit.ly/1wvFurD>

“**Information Ecosystems in Transition: A Case Study from Myanmar**”, Internews <http://bit.ly/1z3fLsZ>

“**Administering the State in Myanmar**”, Asia Foundation <http://bit.ly/1tp2Ym>