

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE A SEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
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- **The Election Commission (EC) backtracks on a proposal to delay the 8 November elections due to landslides and floods, after widespread criticism from the NLD and national and international media.**
- **However, the EC cancels polling in over 600 village tracts, compared to 478 in 2010.**
- **Tatmadaw hostilities block campaigns and state-backed militias threaten voters in ethnic areas, with some militia members recruited as 'special police' for the elections.**
- **Violent attacks against NLD members and supporters leave many injured and intimidated, including candidate Naing Ngan Lin who remains in hospital after a sword attack.**
- **Police arrest NLD activists and charge them under Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Law for assisting a pro-NLD rally in Monywa, Sagaing Division. Independent candidate Myat Nu Khaing is arrested and sent to Insein prison for her participation in a protest in December 2014.**
- **Monks and politicians freely use religion to influence politics, inciting hatred against Muslims and defaming the NLD.**
- **Allegations of vote-buying, defamation and other questionable campaign tactics continue to plague the run-up to the elections.**
- **Unobserved advance voting begins overseas and in-country, amid registration obstacles, voter list errors and missing ballots.**
- **Naypyidaw signs the 'Nationwide' Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with 8 ethnic armed groups, less than half of Burma/Myanmar's armed ethnic bloc. Meanwhile the Tatmadaw punishes non-signatories with major offensives that displace up to 5,000 civilians and close polls.**
- **Authorities crackdown on social media users, arresting several people for Facebook posts and charging them under the vague Telecommunications Law and Criminal Code.**
- **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee tells the UN General Assembly that disenfranchisement and rights restrictions place doubt on the prospect of 'free and fair' elections.**

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Election Commission backtracks on election postponement

On 13 October, Election Commission (EC) Chairman Tin Aye told seven political parties that the EC was considering postponing the 8 November elections, citing recent floods and landslides.¹ The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), National Development Party (NDP) and Myanmar Farmers' Development Party (MFDP) agreed, and the Arakan National Party (ANP), National Democratic Force (NDF) and National Unity Party (NUP) deferred to the EC, while the National League for Democracy (NLD) strongly opposed any delay.² That evening, after widespread confusion, and criticism from the NLD and international and national media, the EC retracted its proposal and stated that the elections will proceed as planned.³ However, the EC stuck to an earlier decision to cancel elections in hundreds of village tracts in Kachin, Karen/Kayin, Mon and Shan States and in Pegu/Bago Division [see *More constituencies blacklisted in 2015 than 2010*].⁴

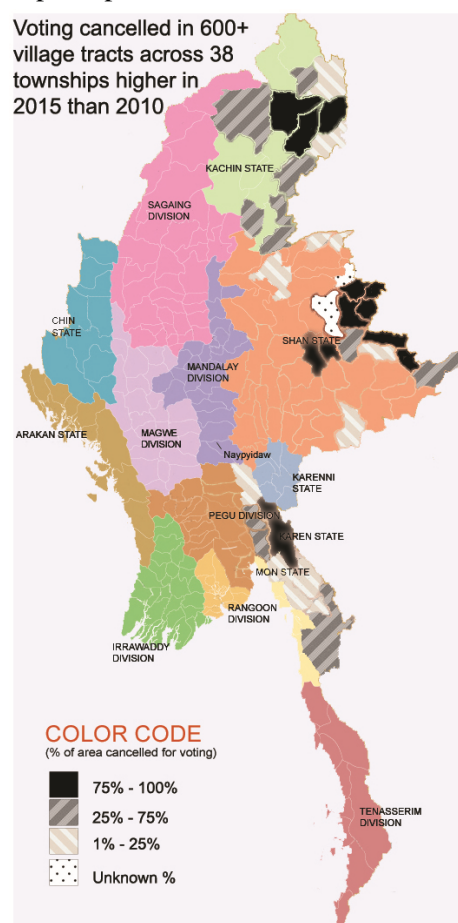
The EC's erratic decisions attracted widespread criticism.⁵ NLD spokesperson Win Htein said that he remained "confounded" by the EC's U-turn and ANP leader Aye Thar Aung questioned the real motive behind the delay.⁶

More constituencies blacklisted in 2015 than 2010

On 12 October, the Election Commission (EC) cancelled voting in nearly 600 village tracts due to a lack of security assurances – mostly in Kachin and Shan States – which is significantly more than the 478 cancelled in 2010, a fact denied by EC Chairman Tin Aye.⁷

According to Kachin State EC sub-commission officials, most of the state's 212 cancelled village tracts across 11 townships are Kachin Independence Army (KIA)-controlled territory,⁸ with a majority in Injangyang, Sumprabum, Momauk, and Waingmaw constituencies.⁹ Kachin political parties have stronger support in these areas, meaning the decision "has a real impact on Kachin parties," according to Kachin State Democracy Party leader Manam Tu Ja.¹⁰

Voting was also ruled out in 41 village tracts in Pegu/Bago Division and 94 in Karen/Kayin State despite the lack of armed hostilities. Election officials said that no village tracts were cancelled in Pegu Division in 2010, but explained that instability in Kyaukkyi and Shwegyin Townships since then had left numerous villages uninhabited, blaming the Karen



¹ Mizzima (13 Sep 15) UEC chairperson U Tin Aye says he wants to postpone the elections; Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Election Commission May Postpone November Poll; Myanmar Times (13 Oct 15) Election date in doubt as UEC proposes postponement

² Mizzima (13 Sep 15) UEC chairperson U Tin Aye says he wants to postpone the elections; Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Election Commission May Postpone November Poll; Myanmar Times (13 Oct 15) Election date in doubt as UEC proposes postponement

³ Myanmar Now (13 Oct 15) Myanmar elections could be postponed due to floods; Reuters (13 Oct 15) Myanmar to hold landmark vote as planned on November 8: state TV; AP (13 Oct 15) Myanmar says election to be held as planned despite flooding; DVB (14 Oct 15) Election 2015: The show must go on; Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Nov. 8 Election to Be Held on Schedule, UEC Says; Myanmar Times (13 Oct 15) Vote to go ahead after day of confusion

⁴ GNLM (13 Oct 15) Elections cancelled in some village-tracts; EMG (14 Oct 15) UEC announces constituencies where election to be postponed

⁵ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Candidates, Voters Slam Election Delay Proposal

⁶ DVB (14 Oct 15) Parties question UEC impartiality;

⁷ GNLM (13 Oct 15) Elections cancelled in some village-tracts; Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010; Xinhua (29 Oct 15) Interview: Security status for forthcoming general election good: Myanmar election official

⁸ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010

⁹ BNI (16 Oct 15) Voting Canceled In Parts Of Kachin State As Conflict Continues

¹⁰ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010; BNI (16 Oct 15) Voting Canceled In Parts Of Kachin State As Conflict Continues

National Union (KNU). Voting was also cancelled in Bawnawkhe Village Tract in Bilin Township, Mon State.¹¹

Echoing criticism of other authorities in Kyainnseiki Township, Karen State [see *September 2015 Burma Bulletin*], village tract administrator Kyaw Swar said in an interview on 20 October that the conditions in his area are not insecure and do not merit a cancellation, especially given the newly signed Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the KNU [see *Incomplete NCA signed*].¹²

In line with previous announcements [see *August 2015 Burma Bulletin*], the EC confirmed that five entire Shan State townships were cancelled: Panghsang, Mongmao, Namphan, Pangwaun, and Mongla. The first four are territories held by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), and the latter is controlled by the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), two ethnic armed groups who were not involved in NCA negotiations.¹³ Fifty-six village tracts across Mongyang, Mongyawng, Matman, Mongkhet, Mongton, Konkyan, Muse, and Mantong/Mantung Townships were also cancelled.¹⁴

On 19 October, state-run Global New Light of Myanmar reported that the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) requested the EC to suspend voting in Monghsu, Kyethi, and Tangyan Townships, Shan State, due to hostilities [see *Tatmadaw heightens offensives against non-ceasefire groups*], with a subsequent letter asking the EC to resume elections there when stability was restored.¹⁵ On 27 October, the EC announced voting was cancelled in Monghsu and Kyethi Townships as well as 50 wards and village tracts of Tangyan and Hopang Townships, Shan State.¹⁶ EC Chairman Tin Aye justified these blacklistings on 29 October in Naypyidaw, saying the decision was supported by candidates as well as the Shan State government and associated EC sub-commissions.¹⁷ The cancellation will keep vacant at least seven out of the 330 elected seats in the People's Assembly.¹⁸

Uncertain electoral conditions persist in conflict zones

On 1 October, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S) sent a letter to political parties saying it had lifted its advisory ban on campaigning in 12 townships in Shan State after reaching an agreement with the Tatmadaw [see *September 2015 Burma Bulletin*], but requested parties to inform the group of their campaign plans.¹⁹ Candidates from multiple parties complained that hostilities either interrupted campaign plans or completely halted them.²⁰ On 20 October, following a meeting with signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), EC Chairman Tin Aye promised reporters that voting would occur in areas of Shan State where the RCSS/SSA-S is active and that he would ask the Tatmadaw to avoid fighting in those areas.²¹

As of 16 October, heavy fighting and restrictions on movement in Kachin State had prevented some candidates from even starting their campaigns, especially in and around Myitkyina, Mohnyin, and Bhamo/Bamaw Townships. On 1 October it was reported that Aung San Suu Kyi cancelled her plans to campaign in Hpakant, Tanai, Mansi/Manje, and Momauk Townships, Kachin State, due to security concerns and transport issues.²² On 5 October it was reported that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) would not interfere on election day, and would instead focus their energies on the peace process.²³

¹¹ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010

¹² BNI (20 Oct 15) Interview About Cancellation Of Voting In Eastern Karen State

¹³ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010

¹⁴ GNLM (13 Oct 15) Elections cancelled in some village-tracts; Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Vote cancellations in conflict areas higher than in 2010

¹⁵ GNLM (23 Oct 15) Streamlining the votes: UEC to issue voting tickets to voters ahead of election

¹⁶ GNLM (31 Oct 15) Political parties support UECs decision not to hold election in four townships

¹⁷ GNLM (30 Oct 15) Election postponement in some townships is not unilateral decision; GNLM (31 Oct 15) Political parties support UECs decision not to hold election in four townships

¹⁸ Myanmar Times (28 Oct 15) UEC cancels voting in two more Shan townships

¹⁹ The Voice Daily (02 Oct 15) SSA lifts ban on political party campaigning; Myanmar Times (05 Oct 15) Ethnic armed groups take no responsibility for election security

²⁰ Irrawaddy (06 Oct 15) Fresh Clashes in SSPP Territory after Ceasefire Rejection; DVB (22 Oct 15) Shan bomb blast leaves 4 injured

²¹ Myanmar Times (21 Oct 15) UEC backs elections in Shan ceasefire regions

²² EMG (01 Oct 15) Suu Kyi cancels Kachin dates

²³ Myanmar Times (05 Oct 15) Ethnic armed groups take no responsibility for election security; BNI (20 Oct 15) RCSS Vows Restraint During Election Period; Myanmar Times (07 Oct 15) KIO: 'We can't sign if the govt does not accept all groups'

State-backed ethnic parties and militias threaten, penalize voters

On 27 October it was reported that villagers in Shan State's Wa Self-Administered Division have been threatened against voting for the Wa National Unity Party (WNUP), allegedly by the state-backed Wa Democratic Party (WDP), including threats to kick villagers out of their homes.²⁴ On 29 October it was reported that Hopong, Hsi Hseng and Pinlaung Township residents in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone of Southern Shan State have come under increasing pressure from state-backed Pa-O National Organization (PNO) militias who have intimidated voters not to support the National League for Democracy (NLD) and have allegedly fined households for not flying the PNO party flag.²⁵

Violent attacks against NLD members and supporters

On 12 October, around 30 men, some wearing headbands with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) logo, broke into the sleeping quarters of National League for Democracy (NLD) members in Chipwi Township, Kachin State, and damaged 3,000,000 kyat (US\$2,335) worth of property, beating up some of the NLD members and threatening to shoot them if they didn't leave the area.²⁶ NLD supporters suspected the perpetrators belong to the state-backed New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K), which recently attempted to ban the NLD's campaign presence in areas of Kachin State [see *September 2015 Burma Bulletin*], and also blamed the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State (UDPKS).²⁷ In an interview published on 29 October, independent incumbent and NDA-K militia leader Zakhung Ting Ying said that the NLD's campaign is effectively "destroying the regional campaign," and that his community doesn't support the "destruction of stability by other parties."²⁸

Another violent attack against the NLD occurred on 29 October when a group of men armed with swords attacked an NLD rally in Rangoon/Yangon's Thaketa Township, severely injuring local candidate Naing Ngan Lin and harming several other NLD members. The police have so far detained three suspects for the attack, and the candidate is recovering in hospital.²⁹ These attacks add to a number of assaults against NLD members and supporters reported in October:

- **2 October:** NLD member Win Myint told media that the party has filed an official complaint over an alleged assault of a party member by a local Election Commission (EC) sub-commission leader on 22 September in Myaungmya/Myang Mya Township, Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady Division.³⁰
- **3 October:** NLD candidate Susanna Hla Hla Soe told the press that she is worried about her safety after her supporters were attacked at a Rangoon campaign rally.³¹
- **14 October:** It was reported that a group of NLD candidates were attacked by a local resident in Pyawbwe Township, Mandalay Division.³²
- **15 October:** A headmaster in Thitseintgyi Village, Wetlet Township, Sagaing Division, beat his students for welcoming NLD members to their school.³³
- **17 October:** Several people were reportedly injured after unidentified motorcyclists attacked an NLD campaign rally with slingshots in a village in Naypyidaw's Dekkhinathiri Township.³⁴ Two of USDP member Nyint Tin's children were reportedly investigated for the attack.³⁵
- **21 October:** NLD campaign manager in Maubin Township, Irrawaddy Division, Thant Zin Latt was attacked by USDP campaign manager Sein Hlaing.³⁶

²⁴ Myanmar Times (27 Oct 15) Wa election rivalry intensifies

²⁵ Myanmar Times (29 Oct 15) Parties accuse Pa-O militia of threats and intimidation

²⁶ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 15) NLD Abandons Rally Plans After Attack on Members in Kachin State

²⁷ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 15) NLD Abandons Rally Plans After Attack on Members in Kachin State; BNI (16 Oct 15) Kachin Party Leader Vows To Probe Alleged Attack On NLD in Chipwe

²⁸ BNI (29 Oct 15) Interview with Zakhung Tin Ying Independent MP for Kachin Constituency No 5

²⁹ BBC (29 Oct 15) Myanmar election: Opposition rally attacked with swords; GNLM (31 Oct 15) Three NLD members injured in sword attack in Yangon; AFP (30 Oct 15) Myanmar opposition candidate knifed while canvassing

³⁰ Irrawaddy (02 Oct 15) Campaign Trail Violence Against NLD Supporters Mars Delta Township Campaigning

³¹ Irrawaddy (06 Oct 15) NLD Candidate Feels 'Unsafe' after Attack on Party Official

³² Irrawaddy (26 Oct 15) Bumps in the Road: A Chronicle of Campaign Offences

³³ EMG (26 Oct 15) Head beats pupils who welcomed NLD

³⁴ EMG (24 Oct 15) NLD's posters destroyed in Nay Pyi Taw; Myanmar Times (27 Oct 15) Police investigate alleged attack on NLD candidates

³⁵ Myanmar Times (30 Oct 15) Stabbed NLD candidate faces long recovery as party calls for swift investigation

³⁶ Irrawaddy (23 Oct 15) NLD Campaigner Assaulted in Irrawaddy Delta

Opposition party's activists and candidate arrested for peaceful assembly

Several political activists and candidates were arrested for peaceful demonstrations. On 11 October, four people were charged under Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Law for assisting a pro-National League for Democracy (NLD) rally organized by trishaw drivers in Monywa, Sagaing Division.³⁷ Those arrested included freelance photographer Aung Nay Myo, who was previously arrested in February this year for a Facebook post [see *February 2015 Burma Bulletin*], and Nay Thiha, a campaign staffer for the NLD Sagaing Division office, as well as two student activists.³⁸

On 16 October, independent candidate for Phyu constituency, Pegu/Bago Division, Myat Nu Khaing was arrested and detained in Insein prison for joining a peaceful protest in Rangoon/Yangon in December 2014 against the fatal police shooting of a protestor at the Letpadaung (Monywa) copper mine.³⁹ She had been charged under Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Law and Articles 147, 353 and 505(b) of the Criminal Code. Myat Nu Khaing's campaign manager said the charges were an attempt to sabotage her election campaign,⁴⁰ given that six other protestors were charged and sentenced under the same charges in May, and she had made no attempt to evade police since the protest.⁴¹

Religion and politics: a dangerous combination

On 14 October, in its annual international religious freedom report, the US State Department listed persistent state-backed abuse and discrimination against religious minorities in Burma/Myanmar, particularly Muslims, as a concern.⁴² It also noted the spread of hate speech and anti-Muslim sentiment, notably by the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha).⁴³ Throughout October, there were numerous instances of monks and politicians using religion to influence politics:

- **4 October:** It was reported that leading Ma Ba Tha member Wirathu openly endorsed the USDP.⁴⁴
- **8 October:** It was reported that NLD candidate Maung Thein in Zeegone Township, Pegu/Bago Division, alleged that rival USDP candidates Vice President Nyan Htun and Pegu Division Chief Minister Nyan Win urged monks to vote for the USDP and to smear the NLD.⁴⁵
- **9 October:** NLD candidate Saw Thein Htun told the press that locals in Arakan/Rakhine State have prevented him from campaigning in several locations, calling the NLD a Muslim party.⁴⁶
- **14 October:** Nationalist monk Eaindra Sar Ya urged Aung San Suu Kyi to cancel her Arakan State campaigning because it could “provoke protests and incite religious tensions,” and openly pledged his support for the anti-Rohingya Arakan National Party, the “only party that is good for Rakhine.”⁴⁷
- **15 October:** An unnamed Ma Ba Tha leader stated that the nationalist group is campaigning for the USDP by promoting the discriminatory Protection of Race and Religion laws.⁴⁸
- **20 October:** Tatmadaw Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing told military officers to vote for candidates “who can protect race and religion.”⁴⁹

Questionable campaign tactics continue

The run-up to the 8 November elections has involved countless instances of vote-buying, campaign bans and other questionable tactics [see *August and September 2015 Burma Bulletins*]. Notable incidents in October include:⁵⁰

³⁷ Irrawaddy (12 Oct 15) NLD Campaigners Charged with Unlawful Assembly in Monywa

³⁸ Irrawaddy (12 Oct 15) NLD Campaigners Charged with Unlawful Assembly in Monywa

³⁹ Irrawaddy (19 Oct 15) Independent Election Hopeful Arrested Over 2014 Anti-Mine Protest

⁴⁰ Irrawaddy (21 Oct 15) Supporter of Jailed Candidate Says Charges Meant to Crush Campaign

⁴¹ Irrawaddy (19 Oct 15) Independent Election Hopeful Arrested Over 2014 Anti-Mine Protest; DVB (20 Oct 15) Independent candidate arrested for sedition

⁴² US State Department (14 Oct 15) Burma 2014 International Religious Freedom Report

⁴³ US State Department (14 Oct 15) Burma 2014 International Religious Freedom Report

⁴⁴ Reuters (04 Oct 15) Myanmar radical monk endorses ruling party in election, raps opposition

⁴⁵ DVB (08 Oct 15) Monks are helping USDP, says NLD candidate

⁴⁶ Irrawaddy (09 Oct 15) NLD No Match for Formidable Opponents in Arakan State

⁴⁷ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Nationalist monk tells NLD leader to avoid Rakhine

⁴⁸ Myanmar Times (15 Oct 15) Divisions as Ma Ba Tha begins 'campaigning'

⁴⁹ Irrawaddy (21 Oct 15) Vote for 'Correct' Candidates, Says Military Chief

- **1 October:** Mandalay Division Chief Minister and Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) candidate Ye Myint denied accusations of vote buying after he returned approximately 400 acres (1.6 km²) of land to local farmers, previously confiscated for military projects.⁵¹
- **12 October:** The Irrawaddy newspaper's Burmese website was hacked, and a fabricated story was inserted to discredit Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD).⁵²
- **14 October:** It was reported that USDP candidate Win Win Thi, contesting a lower house seat in Naypyidaw's Pyinmana, admitted to paying for motorcycle fuel, campaign clothes and food for those who supported campaign rallies in the capital.⁵³
- **15 October:** The Election Commission (EC) instructed all political parties not to campaign in civil servant housing areas, saying it "could lead to disunity among the officials."⁵⁴
- **17 October:** NLD candidate Aye Mya Mya Myo claimed that several of her rallies were cancelled in villages in Kyauktan Township, Rangoon/Yangon Division through misinformation spread by unidentified individuals.⁵⁵
- **19 October:** It was reported that President's Office Minister and independent candidate Aung Min had distributed rice to every village in Shadaw Township, Karenni/Kayah State, adding to existing suspicions of vote-buying.⁵⁶
- **22 October:** State-run newspapers, Myanmar Ahlin and The Mirror, published a four-page spread listing the current administration's achievements to date, attracting criticism from other political parties as unfair use of state media.⁵⁷
- **26 October:** NLD candidate Win Min told the press that despite finally arriving on the Coco Islands, only around 20% of eligible voters on the islands could be reached and campaigning was heavily constrained by signs prohibiting access due to "military security."⁵⁸
- **27 October:** Famous Burmese singers supporting the NLD were reportedly threatened by unknown individuals who said they were being closely monitored by the authorities.⁵⁹
- **29 October:** It was reported that military officers and owners of publicly-owned companies around Mandalay Division refused to allow polling stations on many premises, leading to 700 fewer polling booths in the division despite a population increase.⁶⁰

Suu Kyi confirms post-election leadership role as USDP re-endorses Thein Sein

In October, parties continued campaigning across the country, and Burma/Myanmar's post-election leadership became an increasing focus of discussion. On 7 October, Aung San Suu Kyi told reporters that she would lead the government after a National League for Democracy (NLD) election win, as she is leader of the party, despite being constitutionally barred from the role of President.⁶¹ Aung San Suu Kyi told crowds at a rally in Rangoon/Yangon earlier in the month that the party had chosen a candidate for the role of President, but she could not reveal it yet.⁶² On 31 October, National Parliament Speaker and former Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) Chairman Shwe Mann reportedly hinted at an interest in a coalition government with the NLD.⁶³

The USDP confirmed its endorsement of President Thein Sein for a second term, in a statement on 17 October.⁶⁴ The President is not running for election on 8 November, but according to Burma's

⁵⁰ For a full list of October incidents, please refer to Altsean's website:

<http://www.altsean.org/Chronology/Chronology2015/DemocracyChronology2015.htm>

⁵¹ Myanmar Times (01 Oct 15) Land return was not campaigning: minister

⁵² Irrawaddy (12 Oct 15) Hackers Hit The Irrawaddy's Burmese Website with False News Story

⁵³ EMG (14 Oct 15) USDP candidate pays supporters to attend campaign events

⁵⁴ Myanmar Times (19 Oct 15) Civil servant quarters out of bounds for door-to-door campaigns

⁵⁵ EMG (17 Oct 15) NLD candidate slams misinformation

⁵⁶ Kantarawaddy Times (19 Oct 15) Minister Aung Min Gives Rice to Voters During Campaign in Karenni State; Irrawaddy (31 Oct 15) Courting With Cash? USDP Dogged by Vote-Buying Accusations

⁵⁷ Irrawaddy (22 Oct 15) State-Run Dailies Feature Four-Page List of Govt Achievements

⁵⁸ Irrawaddy (26 Oct 15) Coco Islands Candidate Claims NLD Trio Barred From 80% of Voters

⁵⁹ Irrawaddy (27 Oct 15) NLD-Supporting Singers Receive Warnings over Politicking

⁶⁰ Myanmar Times (29 Oct 15) Tatmadaw, ministries block polling stations

⁶¹ AP (07 Oct 15) Suu Kyi Says She Will Lead Gov't if Party Wins Myanmar Polls; Reuters (07 Oct 15) Suu Kyi says hopes to lead Myanmar despite constitutional ban

⁶² Irrawaddy (19 Oct 15) USDP Backs President Thein Sein for Second Term: Party Official

⁶³ The Independent (02 Nov 15) Burma: All eyes on Aung San Suu Kyi as country gears up for free election

⁶⁴ DPA (17 Oct) Thein Sein poised for second term; Irrawaddy (19 Oct 15) USDP Backs President Thein Sein for Second Term: Party Official

Constitution the President is not required to be an MP [see *Fear & Voting in Burma/Myanmar: 2015 Election*]. Despite cultivating a reformist image, President Thein Sein told supporters in a recent speech that “we have changed to the democracy that people want” and there is no need for more change.⁶⁵ Thein Sein was also endorsed by five independent candidates in Naypyidaw, who claimed that they were running at his request, as USDP candidates in their constituencies had been picked by ousted former party Chairman and National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann.⁶⁶

Advance overseas voting in disarray

Advance overseas voting took place between 13 and 23 October, with thousands of Burmese migrants abroad travelling to embassies to cast their vote. According to the Election Commission (EC), around 30,000 overseas voters were registered, a tiny proportion of the millions living overseas, due to complex registration procedures and announcements [see *September 2015 Burma Bulletin*].⁶⁷ In Thailand, where an estimated 2.5 million Burmese migrant workers live legally, only 3,000 voters had registered for an advanced vote.⁶⁸

Voting began in Singapore on 15 October, where an estimated 250,000 Burmese migrants live, and was scheduled to run until 18 October. However, the embassy was forced to extend voting for another three days to deal with the large numbers queuing to vote.⁶⁹ It was reported that many voters turned up to find they hadn't been provided with the correct number of ballot papers, or their names were missing from the voter lists.⁷⁰ One man reportedly found his entire ward was missing from the list, despite having applied.⁷¹ These complaints were echoed in Korea, where embassy staff said that for the 6,311 voter applications it sent to the EC, only 3,788 ballot papers were sent back, some of which were incorrect.⁷²

On 20 October, it was reported that EC Chair Tin Aye stated that he planned to send new ballots to Thailand (where voters were also missing from the list), Singapore and Korea to address advance voting problems, but said that the EC could not guarantee them getting there on time, and could not print new ballots “beyond what is needed.”⁷³

Concern over advance domestic voting

Advance voting within Burma/Myanmar began on 29 October, according to state-run media, and is scheduled to run until 7 November, for those – such as students, soldiers, politicians, civil servants, and media – who will not be in their home constituency on election day.⁷⁴ On 13 October, detained Letpadan student leader Min Thway Thit told reporters that the students had been offered an advance vote by prison authorities, although some were reluctant to use it due to fear of it being manipulated.⁷⁵

On 1 October, National League for Democracy (NLD) patron Tin Oo warned voters at the NLD campaign launch in Sagaing Division to be on the alert for invalid advance votes, which were instrumental to the Union Solidarity and Development Party's (USDP) win in 2010.⁷⁶

⁶⁵ Irrawaddy (30 Oct 15) Burma Has Changed Enough, Thein Sein Says

⁶⁶ Myanmar Times (21 Oct 15) Nay Pyi Taw independents back U Thein Sein for re-election

⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (18 Oct 15) Hundreds of Burmese Citizens Queue to Vote in Singapore; DVB (15 Oct 15) ELECTION 2015: Advanced voting begins in Singapore; AFP (15 Oct 15) Myanmar nationals in Singapore cast advance vote

⁶⁸ DVB (17 Oct 15) Burmese migrant workers in Thailand 'shut out from voting'

⁶⁹ AP (18 Oct 15) Hundreds Of Myanmar Citizens Line Up To Vote In Singapore; ⁶⁹DVB (15 Oct 15) ELECTION 2015: Advanced voting begins in Singapore

⁷⁰ Myanmar Times 920 Oct 15) Overseas votes marred by limited registration, lack of ballot papers

⁷¹ EMG (15 Oct 15) Thousands vote at embassy in Singapore

⁷² Myanmar Times 920 Oct 15) Overseas votes marred by limited registration, lack of ballot papers

⁷³ RFA (20 Oct 15) Myanmar Gives EU Observers Access To Voting on Military Bases

⁷⁴ Myanmar Times (22 Oct 15) Advanced voting prompts confusion; Irrawaddy (29 Oct 15) Scrutiny as In-Country Advance Voting Begins; DVB (30 Oct 15) Curtain raiser: Advance voting begins

⁷⁵ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 15) Ballots Offered to Students Jailed Over Letpadan Crackdown

⁷⁶ EMG (04 Oct 15) NLD patron warns about invalid votes

Election day observers

On 29 October, the Election Commission (EC) Chairman Tin Aye told press that the EC had accredited six international observer groups, 13 domestic groups, and observers dispatched by 30 foreign embassies in Burma/Myanmar.⁷⁸ The US-Based Carter Centre, the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM), and the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) are the premier organizations in the first ever grouping of international election observers to work in Burma/Myanmar.⁷⁹

By mid-October, the EU EOM had 39 observers in Burma, ANFREL had 31, the Carter Centre had 10 and the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) had accredited 130 long-term and about 1,000 short-term observers.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in at least one instance, a PACE election observer was turned away from a township voter display because the regional sub-commission did not know what the accreditation badges looked like.⁸¹

On 20 October, the head of the EU's EOM, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, told press that following a meeting with Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, the EU mission had been granted access to all polling stations located on military grounds for election day oversight, excepting situations of national security.⁸²

On 27 October, the Information Ministry announced it was arranging one-month visas for foreign press, although media personnel must be cleared by the respective district and township EC sub-commission officials to enter polling stations.⁸³

Election day security

On 15 October, 40,000 'special police' appointed for month-long election supervision were assigned duties for the pre-election period,⁸⁴ and underwent training from 20 to 31 October in their respective states and divisions.⁸⁵ Rangoon/Yangon Division received 5,495 special police, more than double the number in 2010.⁸⁶ Special police lack the right to arrest, will not be armed, cannot enter polling stations at will, and are answerable to polling station officers before local ward EC sub-commissions.⁸⁷

On 3 October, Naypyidaw deputy police head Col Zaw Khin Aung told a security briefing that in case of basic emergencies, special police will be deployed with local police; in a 'level two' emergency, extra forces from the region and district may be summoned; and 'level three' cases may warrant calling in more reserves, including the Tatmadaw.⁸⁸ Col Zaw Khin Aung also explained that anticipated

Cautionary highlights from Carter Centre

A 27 October Carter Centre report detailed electoral flaws discovered across three divisions and five states up through 20 October:⁷⁷

- Numerous reports of intimidation and physical attacks on political party members.
- Forty complaints nationwide relating to Ma Ba Tha's misuse of religion, whether related to nationalist political objectives or hate speech, with no action taken.
- Ninety-four campaign-related incidents reported to the police, with 78 cases opened and 62 pending investigation (at least five included attacks on the NLD).
- In some areas under ethnic armed groups, voters lack guarantees of security or are intimidated, and some campaign access is restricted.
- "Larger than expected" amount of polling cancellations.
- "Unfortunate" denial of observation of advance ballots.
- Discriminatory neglect in voter education for Muslims.

⁷⁷ Irrawaddy (28 Oct 15) US-Based Observation Mission Finds Flaws Ahead of Poll

⁷⁸ Xinhua (29 Oct 15) Interview: Security status for forthcoming general election good: Myanmar election official

⁷⁹ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Election observers: the eyes of the world

⁸⁰ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Mandalay observers 'go their own way'; GNLM (12 Oct 15) EU Election Observation Mission deploys 30 long-term observers; Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Election observers: the eyes of the world

⁸¹ Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Election observers: the eyes of the world

⁸² Reuters (20 Oct 15) EU observers of Myanmar election allowed to access military areas: observer; GNLM (20 Oct 15) Head of EU's election observer mission holds high-level talks in the capital

⁸³ GNLM (27 Oct 15) Notice for foreign correspondents to cover 2015 general election

⁸⁴ Xinhua (24 Oct 15) Myanmar trains over 40,000 special police force for election

⁸⁵ DVB (18 Oct 15) Civilian 'special police' to provide security during election

⁸⁶ Xinhua (24 Oct 15) Myanmar trains over 40,000 special police force for election

⁸⁷ Myanmar Now (26 Oct 15) "Special police" get ready for Myanmar elections

⁸⁸ Myanmar Times (06 Oct 15) Election police training to begin

problem areas on election day will be covered with extra patrols, including plain-clothes police; that surveillance will cover transit points, monasteries and religious buildings, hotels, motels, and guest houses; vehicle patrols have power to stop and search; overnight guest lists will be checked; neighborhood watches alerted; and migrant workers' movements tracked.⁸⁹ On 30 October it was reported that police and military personnel had increased security in Arakan/Rakhine State, forming checkpoints and searching passenger vehicles.⁹⁰

Despite requests by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) that the Tatmadaw not stand as polling booth security,⁹¹ government troops will be stationed at 208 polling stations in Kachin State, supported by 800 specially-recruited civilian police officers.⁹²

Militia members fill ranks of special police

According to official statements, the special police are supposed to be non-partisan civilians,⁹³ and many recruits include auxiliary firemen, former soldiers and army officers, Red Cross volunteers, and members of ward administration offices.⁹⁴ In Kachin and Shan States, however, militia members have also been recruited.⁹⁵

On 16 October it was reported that 105 special police officers in Kachin State, who will oversee polling in Kawnglangphu, Nongmung, Chipwi, and Waingmaw Townships are state-backed militia members. The two active Kachin State militias are Lasang Awng Wa and the New Democratic Army-Kachin (NDA-K) – the latter of recently attempted to ban campaigning by the National League for Democracy (NLD) and other parties, and whose members may have participated in an attack on NLD members on 12 October [see *Violent attacks on NLD members and supporters*].⁹⁶ On 20 October, at the opening of special police training in Taunggyi, Shan State, Police Force Commander Brig Gen Aung Aung confirmed that some of the state's over 4,000 special police will be militia members.⁹⁷

INSIDE BURMA

Incomplete 'Nationwide' Ceasefire Agreement signed

On 15 October in Naypyidaw, President Thein Sein, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) Chairman Htay Oo, National Assembly Speaker Khin Aung Myint, and National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with eight ethnic armed organizations (EAOs).⁹⁸ Due to the government's unwillingness to fully include the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Arakan Army (AA) in the NCA, 10 other EAOs abstained from signing the accord in October.⁹⁹ As a result, the agreement fell short of its 'nationwide' billing, especially since the non-signatory groups have an estimated 48,000 troops under their command compared to the 16,000 of the EAOs that signed.¹⁰⁰ Out of the signatory EAOs, only the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S) had recently clashed with the Tatmadaw [see *September 2015 Burma Bulletin*], while several of the non-signatories are embroiled in conflict.¹⁰¹ In his monthly radio address on 6 October, President Thein Sein stated that the 10 non-signatory groups

⁸⁹ Myanmar Times (06 Oct 15) Election police training to begin

⁹⁰ BNI (30 Oct 15) Security tightened in Arakan State as election draws closer

⁹¹ Myanmar Times (05 Oct 15) Ethnic armed groups take no responsibility for election security

⁹² Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) In Kachin, candidates grapple with unstable electoral landscape

⁹³ Myanmar Times (21 Jul 15) Special police to be assigned for election security

⁹⁴ Myanmar Now (26 Oct 15) "Special police" get ready for Myanmar elections; BNI (22 Oct 15) Over 4,000 special police officers appointed for election duties in Shan State; Kantarawaddy Times (21 Oct 15) Special police deputized to guard polling stations in Karenni State

⁹⁵ BNI (22 Oct 15) Over 4,000 special police officers appointed for election duties in Shan State

⁹⁶ Irrawaddy (14 Oct 15) NLD Abandons Rally Plans After Attack on Members in Kachin State

⁹⁷ BNI (22 Oct 15) Over 4,000 special police officers appointed for election duties in Shan State

⁹⁸ AP (15 Oct 15) 8 ethnic rebel armies sign cease-fire pact with myanmar govt; Irrawaddy (15 Oct 15) Long-Sought Ceasefire Signed in Naypyidaw; Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Ceasefire pact is 'historic gift': president

⁹⁹ Irrawaddy (01 Oct 15) Ethnic Armed Groups Take Stock After Ceasefire Rift

¹⁰⁰ BBC (15 Oct 15) Ceasefire with rebel groups marks limited milestone for Myanmar

¹⁰¹ Myanmar Times (02 Oct 15) KIO accuses Tatmadaw of trying to force a ceasefire

may sign at a later date if they desire.¹⁰² At the signing, President Thein Sein said: “How many sign is not important. How we implement the negotiated terms is more important.”¹⁰³

On 14 October it was reported that the non-signatory EAOs did not plan to send delegates to witness the event.¹⁰⁶ Due to continued conflict and the exclusion of key groups, Karen National Union (KNU) Vice President Zipporah Sein boycotted the event, as did 88 Generation Peace and Open Society leader Min Ko Naing, and Rakhine National Party senior official Aye Thar Aung.¹⁰⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Chairman Khun Tun Oo also did not attend but were represented by observers of their respective parties.¹⁰⁸

At a press conference in Chiang Mai on 8 October, RCSS/SSA-S Chairman Lt Gen Yawd Serk explained the group’s late decision to join as an initial signer, saying that President Thein Sein and President’s Office Minister/chief negotiator Aung Min had persuaded the EAO to sign by promising to withdraw all military forces from Shan State.¹⁰⁹

On 12 and 13 October, President Thein Sein and the Home Affairs Ministry removed all signatories from the list of unlawful associations and terrorist groups.¹¹⁰

On 13 October, KNU and RCSS delegates met President Thein Sein to request that all political prisoners held as unlawful associates be released, though neither group had an accurate list of these prisoners. ABSDF Vice Chairman Myo Win reportedly said the NCA stipulates that all detainees arrested under the Unlawful Associations Act and those facing trial for demonstrations against the new National Education Law shall be released upon signing.¹¹¹

On 14 October, the KNLA detailed its conditions for signing the NCA, including the demand that the Tatmadaw not increase troops, weapons, or supplies in KNLA territory and that the Tatmadaw coordinates any movements in their territory with the KNU/KNLA.¹¹² On 24 October, however, it was reported that the Tatmadaw sent unannounced reinforcements throughout KNU/KNLA territory, including heavy weapons, and rotated troops, allegedly to defend “against outside enemies.”¹¹³

At a press conference following the NCA signing, Aung Min promoted Naypyidaw’s plans to underwrite development projects in ceasefire areas – including areas under non-signatory control if these groups consent – with domestic and foreign capital, especially industrial zones with garment factories and commercial agribusinesses.¹¹⁴

2015 NCA Stakeholders

Signatories: Karen National Union (KNU); Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA); KNU/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNLA-PC); Arakan Liberation Party (ALP); Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO); Chin National Front (CNF); Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S); All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF).¹⁰⁴

Invited, non-signatories: Arakan National Council (ANC); Kachin Independence Organization/Army (KIO/A); Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP); Lahu Democratic Union (LDU); New Mon State Party (NMSP); Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N); Wa National Organization (WNO); United Wa State Party/Army (UWSP/A); National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K); National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA).¹⁰⁵

Excluded: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA); Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA); Arakan Army (AA).

¹⁰² Xinhua (06 Oct 15) Myanmar president pledges to continue peace process with armed groups

¹⁰³ Myanmar Times (15 Oct 15) As ceasefire signed, president confident more groups will join nationwide pact

¹⁰⁴ AP (15 Oct 15) 8 ethnic rebel armies sign cease-fire pact with myanmar govt; Irrawaddy (15 Oct 15) Long-Sought Ceasefire Signed in Naypyidaw; Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Ceasefire pact is ‘historic gift’: president

¹⁰⁵ IMNA (02 Sep 15) Not all ethnic armed groups ready to sign NCA
tives to witness ceasefire inking

DVB (13 Oct 15) Suu Kyi won’t witness peace accord; Myanmar Times (12 Oct 15) NLD leader and others to miss ceasefire signing

15) Long-Sought Ceasefire Signed in Naypyidaw

¹⁰⁹ Bangkok Post (09 Oct 15) Shan rebels set to sign peace deal

¹¹⁰ GNLM (13 Oct 15) KNU, ABSDF, RCSS/SSA-S removed from list of unlawful associations; GNLM (14 Oct 15) Five more ethnic groups removed from unlawful list

¹¹¹ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) No Longer Unlawful, Ethnic Armed Groups Meet President to Demand Assurances

¹¹² DVB (14 Oct 15) 5 more militias de-listed as unlawful groups; Myanmar Times (15 Oct 15) Post-ceasefire manoeuvring begins

¹¹³ EMG (24 Oct 15) Tatmadaw deploys more troops in KNU territory

¹¹⁴ GNLM (16 Oct 15) Development projects will prioritise areas under ceasefire

From 15-17 October, NCA stakeholders held the Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM) in Naypyidaw, where parties formed the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JCMC) to prevent armed clashes, and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) to facilitate political dialogue.¹¹⁵ They agreed to hold the second JICM in mid-November.¹¹⁶ Both sides must draw up a political framework within 60 days from 15 October and start political dialogue within 90 days.¹¹⁷

On 4 October, state-run Myanmar Peace Center senior advisor Zaw Oo said it appeared that “some kinds of authorities, from Yunnan or Beijing” had influenced ethnic armed groups in the north to not sign the NCA.¹¹⁸ However, he later denied this. On 15 October, China’s Foreign Ministry Special Envoy Sun Guoxiang witnessed the NCA signing in Naypyidaw, and denied Chinese ties to the UWSA and KIO, or that China dissuaded them from signing.¹¹⁹

Groups criticize failure at securing ‘nationwide’ peace, fighting continues despite assurances

Several civil society organizations, including 41 Karen organizations in Burma, on the Thai border, and in Malaysia, Japan, Australia, US, UK, and Canada, criticized the lack of inclusiveness in the ceasefire signing.¹²⁰ On 13 October, The Women’s League of Burma (WLB) issued a statement voicing grave concern that the signing of the NCA will cause an “escalation of conflict,” citing the “massive troop reinforcements” that occurred in the first two weeks of October while aid groups lack access to IDPs, and highlighted Naypyidaw’s unwillingness to amend the text to honor a 30% quota of women’s involvement agreed to at June’s Lawkheelar summit.¹²¹

On 19 October, two bombs exploded at the Chin National Front liaison office in Tiddim Township, Chin State, resulting in no casualties but causing suspicion that the attack was a response to the CNF’s signing the NCA.¹²²

Tatmadaw intensifies attacks against non-ceasefire groups

On 4 October, state-run Peace Center special advisor Hla Maung Shwe said that the Tatmadaw did not intend to retaliate against non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).¹²³ In a 1 October interview, however, Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Gen Gun Maw said the Tatmadaw was launching offensives against those ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) who had not agreed to sign the NCA.¹²⁴ A joint statement by 18 Shan civil society groups said the Tatmadaw unleashed “indiscriminate shelling” in civilian areas,¹²⁵ and on 15 October, KIA Col Zau Taung told press that the government “has increased troop mobilization around our headquarters with artillery after we decided not to participate in the ceasefire signing.”¹²⁶ On 17 October, a resident of Myitkyina, Kachin State, told press that Tatmadaw reinforcements arrived in the area by train and trucks during 14-17 October.¹²⁷

State-run media Myawaddy News tallied 37 clashes between the Tatmadaw and Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) between 6-18 October near the SSA-N’s headquarters in Wan Hai Village, Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹²⁸ Three days into heavy shelling and attacks by 10 of its battalions during 6-11 October, the Tatmadaw threatened to bombard the Wan Hai headquarters if SSA-N troops did not

¹¹⁵ GNLM (18 Oct 15) Second JICM to be held in mid-November; Mizzima (19 Oct 15) NCA joint monitoring and dialogue committees formed

¹¹⁶ GNLM (18 Oct 15) Second JICM to be held in mid-November

¹¹⁷ Xinhua (30 Oct 15) Myanmar gov’t, armed groups drafting code of conduct for ceasefire signatories

¹¹⁸ Myanmar Times (05 Oct 15) Ceasefire to be signed October 15

¹¹⁹ Xinhua (15 Oct 15) Myanmar’s peace process makes major step towards ending civil conflict; Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Doors appear closed for three groups fighting in Kokang

¹²⁰ Myanmar Times (06 Oct 15) Kayin groups slam KNU over signing of ceasefire agreement; KIC (06 Oct 15) Karen Groups Call NCA Signing A Nonsense As It Fails to Include All Ethnic Armed Groups

¹²¹ WLB (13 Oct 15) Statement by the Women’s League of Burma: A non-inclusive Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement will not bring peace

¹²² Irrawaddy (20 Oct 15) Chin National Front Office Bombed in Tedim

¹²³ Irrawaddy (05 Oct 15) Ceasefire to Be Signed by Some Armed Groups in October, Others Abstain

¹²⁴ Myanmar Times (02 Oct 15) KIO accuses Tatmadaw of trying to force a ceasefire

¹²⁵ Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) As ink dries, bullets ring out in Shan State

¹²⁶ NY Times (15 Oct 15) Myanmar and 8 Ethnic Groups Sign Cease-Fire, but Doubts Remain

¹²⁷ Kachinland News (18 Oct 15) More Troops Arrive in Myitkyina

¹²⁸ DVB (21 Oct 15) Shan clashes claim over 30 lives; GNLM (20 Oct 15) Shan State Army and Tatmadaw clash 37 times in October

vacate a base at Tar San Pu Village, Kyethi Township.¹²⁹ Tatmadaw commanders later said the existence of the base broke the terms of the 2012 ceasefire.¹³⁰ On 16 October SSA-N Lt Col Sai Hla said that ethnic armed troops retreated in order to lessen civilian casualties,¹³¹ and an SSA-N/Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) delegation met chief government negotiator Aung Min in Naypyidaw the next day.¹³² Despite the SSA-N's compliance with Tatmadaw demands to retreat, 1,000 reinforcements strengthened the attack on 20 October amidst three days of air strikes and artillery fire.¹³³ On 29 October Tatmadaw troops fired 120mm artillery shells on the SSA-N's Wan Hai headquarters, eight of which landed in Wan Hai Village proper, including on a school where around 200 villagers were celebrating Thadingyut.¹³⁴

On 18 October, the eight EAOs that signed the NCA requested Naypyidaw to end conflict in Shan and Kachin States, and to send relief supplies to the area's IDPs and refugees,¹³⁵ which was echoed by the US on 20 October.¹³⁶ On 21 October, the SSPP issued an ultimatum to the Vice President and Peacemaking Work Committee Chairman Sai Mauk Khan: Stop attacking the SSA-N/SSPP or no more EAOs will sign the NCA.¹³⁷

In October the Tatmadaw continued offensives against the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA). On 13 October, it was reported that the Tatmadaw had clashed with the TNLA 10 times in October.¹³⁸ Notable clashes included:¹³⁹

- **2 - 6 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA Battalions seven times in Kutkai and Muse Townships, Shan State and Mansi/Manje Township, Kachin State.¹⁴⁰
- **6 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with SSA-N/SSPP forces near Mongnawng town, Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹⁴¹
- **6 October:** Tatmadaw attacked the MNDAA close to the Chinese border.¹⁴²
- **6 October:** Tatmadaw attacked the TNLA in Kyaukme Township, Shan State.¹⁴³
- **6 - 7 October:** Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA Battalions in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, forcing civilians to flee and causing injuries on both sides.¹⁴⁴
- **12 October:** Tatmadaw troops attacked TNLA forces in five separate locations across Nansang, Mongmit, and Kutkai Townships, Shan State, incurring injuries for two civilians used as Tatmadaw porters.¹⁴⁵
- **13 - 19 October:** Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA forces in eight separate incidents in and around Hpakant Township, Kachin State and Kutkai and Kyethi Townships, Shan State.¹⁴⁶
- **24 October:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with MNDAA forces in four separate locations near the Burma/Myanmar-China border.¹⁴⁷

¹²⁹ Myanmar Times (09 Oct 15) Tatmadaw demands Shan forces pull back; Radio Free Asia (08 Oct 15) Myanmar Threatens Shan Rebels in Bid to Force Accord; Irrawaddy (12 Oct 15) Burma Army Attacks HQ of Shan Armed Group SSA-N

¹³⁰ Myanmar Times (20 Oct 15) Attacks on SSPP despite talks, pullback

¹³¹ Irrawaddy (16 Oct 15) Clashes Subside in Shan State Following SSA-N Retreat

¹³² Myanmar Times (20 Oct 15) Attacks on SSPP despite talks, pullback

¹³³ Myanmar Times (20 Oct 15) Attacks on SSPP despite talks, pullback; DVB (21 Oct 15) Shan clashes claim over 30 lives; Myanmar Times (22 Oct 15) Shan group demands VP end fighting

¹³⁴ DVB (29 Oct 15) Burma army launch assault on Shan army HQ

¹³⁵ IMNA (20 Oct 15) Eight armed groups urge to promptly support IDPs

¹³⁶ US Embassy Rangoon (20 Oct 15) Transcript of Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes' Press Availability in Burma

¹³⁷ Myanmar Times (22 Oct 15) Shan group demands VP end fighting

¹³⁸ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Burma Army Troops Clash with TNLA in Northern Shan

¹³⁹ For a full list of October incidents, please refer to Altsean's website:

<http://www.altsean.org/Chronology/Chronology2015/EthnicIssuesChronology2015.htm>

¹⁴⁰ Kachinland News (04 Oct 15) Burmese Army Continued Artillery Fire From Mansi's Pagoda; Kachinland News (04 Oct 15)

Burmese Army Continued Artillery Fire From Mansi's Pagoda; Kachinland News (07 Oct 15) Battles Rage in Kachin State

¹⁴¹ SHAN (06 Oct 15) RCSS deliberates on nationwide ceasefire signing as SSPP clashes with Burma Army

¹⁴² Myanmar Times (08 Oct 15) Renewed attacks cast doubt on ceasefire pledge

¹⁴³ Myanmar Times (08 Oct 15) Renewed attacks cast doubt on ceasefire pledge

¹⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (07 Oct 15) Villagers Flee as Govt Troops Clash with KIA in Hpakantf; EMG (12 Oct 15) KIA and army clash

¹⁴⁵ Irrawaddy (13 Oct 15) Burma Army Troops Clash with TNLA in Northern Shan

¹⁴⁶ Kachinland News (14 Oct 15) Artillery Attack Reported in Hpakant Township; Kachinland News (18 Oct 15) Burmese Army's

418th LIR Troops Ransacked Homes; Kachinland News (20 Oct 15) Battle Rages in Western Kachin State; Kachinland News (20

Oct 15) A Mortar Shell Fell Near A House, Another Fell Inside Church Compound; Kachinland News (21 Oct 15) 238th LIB

Troops Fired on KIA Positions; Kachinland News (21 Oct 15) Battles Rage in Northern Shan State

¹⁴⁷ DVB (26 Oct 15) Govt forces launch attacks on Kokang, Kachin positions

- **28 October:** Local residents said that the Tatmadaw used chemical weapons in its artillery against the MNDA in the higher elevations of conflict in Kokang Self-Administered Zone, though officials from the President’s office denied these accusations the next day.¹⁴⁸

Civilian abuse

Throughout October civilians were continually caught in the crossfire of civil war. On 15 October, Chiang Mai’s ethnic Shan community held a candlelit vigil for more than 1,500 people displaced by fighting in central Shan State since 6 October, issuing a statement condemning the “indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas” and “systematic military operation” to seize Shan territory that has precipitated a food crisis and forced four pregnant women to deliver in the jungle.¹⁴⁹ By 27 October, the Tatmadaw offensive against the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) had displaced about 5,000 people, with estimates that 14 schools and 1,388 homes across 22 villages had been damaged or destroyed.¹⁵⁰

- **1 October:** It was reported that Tatmadaw troops demanded five porters from each of the four blocks in Mansi/Manje Township, Kachin State, to use as forced labor.¹⁵¹
- **5 October:** Two gunmen – later suspected to be Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers – shot and killed civilian mineral trader Khin Maung Lwin in Namt Maw Village, Hpakant Township, Kachin State, with residents citing taxation disputes over jade products as the likely cause.¹⁵²
- **5 October:** Residents of Wan Kawn Yao Village, Loilem District, Shan State demanded the return of 33-year-old farmer Sai Thein Tun who was allegedly beaten and kidnapped on 10 September by Tatmadaw troops of IBs 12 and 246, and accused Tatmadaw troops of pillaging livestock and valuables.¹⁵³
- **10 October:** Villager Nboi Zau Nan of Sum Pyi Yang Village in Sumprabum Township, Kachin State, succumbed to injuries incurred during torture by Tatmadaw forces from 381, 385, and 389 LIBs on 21 July, leaving behind a wife and five children.¹⁵⁴
- **13 October:** Troops from Tatmadaw Battalion 330, called in by local Loi Khan Lone Company management, opened fire on 20 villagers from Na Hai Long Village, Tachilek Township, Eastern Shan State, who had trekked to inspect if gold mining had ceased as agreed a year prior. A 50-year-old man later died in Mong Phyak hospital, while five others were injured.¹⁵⁵
- **14 October:** Four villagers were admitted to a hospital in Mantong/Mantung Township, Northern Shan State, after stepping on landmines while fleeing Tatmadaw-Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) conflict.¹⁵⁶
- **20 October:** It was reported that around 2,000 men, women, and children have fled Tatmadaw offensives near Wanlwe, Wanjong, Lishaw, Konlin, Nampamu, Tasangpu, Nawangkhat, Honam and Nape villages in Kyethi Township, Shan State.¹⁵⁷
- **21 October:** A bomb exploded near a Buddhist monastery in Monghsu, Shan State, injuring two novice monks, a 70-year old woman fasting at the monastery, and severely injuring a young girl, spurring the town’s residents to board up or flee.¹⁵⁸
- **21 October:** Saing Maing, spokesperson for Tai Youth Network which is supporting the displaced villagers of Kyethi Township, Shan State, told press that there is no more room in local monasteries to shelter the fleeing villagers and that the government has not provided any humanitarian supplies.¹⁵⁹

¹⁴⁸ RFA (29 Oct 15) Myanmar Rejects Claim its Troops Used Chemical Weapons in Border Conflict

¹⁴⁹ Irrawaddy (16 Oct 15) Thailand Vigil Offers Foil to Naypyidaw’s Ceasefire Exhortations

¹⁵⁰ Myanmar Times (28 Oct 15) RCSS, rights groups urge end to fighting

¹⁵¹ RFA (02 Oct 15) Myanmar’s Armed Ethnic Groups to Decide on Date to Sign Peace Accord

¹⁵² Irrawaddy (07 Oct 15) KIA Suspected in Shooting Death of Hpakant Jade Trader

¹⁵³ KIC (11 Oct 15) Locals Claim Burma Army ‘Disappeared’ Shan Villager

¹⁵⁴ Kachinland News (12 Oct 15) Father of Five Died from Injuries Sustained During Interrogation

¹⁵⁵ Shan Farmers’ Network and Shan Human Rights Foundation (14 Oct 15) Burma Army soldiers who opened fire on villagers at eastern Shan State gold mine must be prosecuted; RFA (14 Oct 15) Myanmar Army Attacks in Shan State Leave One Villager Dead, Nine Wounded

¹⁵⁶ RFA (14 Oct 15) Myanmar Army Attacks in Shan State Leave One Villager Dead, Nine Wounded

¹⁵⁷ DVB (20 Oct 15) Shan villagers flee Burmese onslaught

¹⁵⁸ DVB (22 Oct 15) Shan bomb blast leaves 4 injured; Irrawaddy (21 Oct 15) Bomb Blast Injures Four as Clashes Continue in Shan State

¹⁵⁹ Myanmar Times (22 Oct 15) Shan group demands VP end fighting

Authorities crackdown on Facebook users

In October, the Burma/Myanmar authorities arrested several people for Facebook posts related to the military, charging them under the Electronic Transaction Law, Telecommunications Law and Criminal Code:

- **12 October:** Police in Maubin Township, Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady Division, charged National League for Democracy (NLD) activist Chaw Sandi Htun under Article 34(d) of the Electronic Transaction Law, which comes with a maximum sentence of five years in prison, for a satirical Facebook post. Chaw Sandi Htun had shared a photo jokingly comparing the new Tatmadaw uniform to one of Aung San Suu Kyi's sarongs, known as htameins.¹⁶⁰ The charge was later changed to Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law.¹⁶¹ Chaw Sandi Tun appeared in Maubin Township Court on 27 October, where she was also charged with defamation under Article 500 of the Criminal Code.¹⁶²
- **14 October:** Police in Hlaing Township, Rangoon/Yangon Division, charged Patrick Khum Jaa Lee, husband of peace activist May Sabe Phyu, under the Telecommunications Law for sharing a photo on Facebook showing a Kachin man standing on a picture of Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing.¹⁶³ Patrick Khum Jaa Lee was transferred to Insein prison, and faces up to three years in prison if found guilty. May Sabe Phyu later told journalists that he had been forced to sign a confession.¹⁶⁴ On 27 October, Patrick Khum Jaa Lee's second court appearance and bail application was deferred until 6 November after the Lt Col who brought the charges failed to appear in court.¹⁶⁵
- **15 October:** It was reported that Mayangone Township police, Rangoon Division, charged Zaw Myo Nyunt under the Electronic Transactions Law for sharing the same photo on Facebook as Patrick Kum Jaa Lee.¹⁶⁶
- **15 October:** Poet and NLD member Ko Saung Kha told reporters that he was in hiding after police filed charges against him under the Telecommunications Law for posting a lewd poem referencing the military on Facebook.¹⁶⁷
- **16 October:** Police in Dawpon Township, Rangoon Division, arrested Ko Lu Zaw Soe Win and charged him under the Electronic Transaction Law for a Facebook post considered insulting to the Tatmadaw.¹⁶⁸
- **20 October:** Police in Kangyidaunk Township, Irrawaddy Division, arrested a local Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) official under the Telecommunications Law for sharing a Facebook post showing the head of Aung San Suu Kyi photo-shopped onto the body of a naked woman.¹⁶⁹

Both Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International condemned the arrests of Chaw Sandi Htun and Patrick Khum Ja Lee, with HRW saying it showed that pressure on activists was being increased ahead of the elections.¹⁷⁰ The US called on the Burmese authorities to release the two immediately and unconditionally, saying the arrests "directly contradict democratic principles and the government's own stated commitment to promote political reform and respect human rights."¹⁷¹ Information Minister Ye Htut however defended the arrests as unrelated to military sensitivities, pointing to the one instance of a USDP official being arrested.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁰DVB (14 Oct 15) Woman arrested for sarong jibe; BBC (13 Oct 15) Myanmar Facebook arrest: Woman held over 'army insult'; Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Social media satire under fire

¹⁶¹ Irrawaddy (29 Oct 15) Woman Faces Additional Charge in Facebook Defamation Trial

¹⁶² Irrawaddy (29 Oct 15) Woman Faces Additional Charge in Facebook Defamation Trial

¹⁶³ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 15) Kachin Activist's Husband Arrested over Facebook Post Said to Defame Army; Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Social media satire under fire; HRW (17 Oct 15) Burma: Activists Charged for Mocking Military Online

¹⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (16 Oct 15) Man Arrested for Facebook Post Denied Bail, Moved to Insein Prison

¹⁶⁵ Irrawaddy (27 Oct 15) Facebook Defamation Trial Deferred, No Bail

¹⁶⁶ DVB (15 Oct 15) Police crack down on social media mock-ups

¹⁶⁷ Myanmar Times (16 Oct 15) Social media satire under fire; Irrawaddy (21 Oct 15) Bard on the Run, Dodging Defamation over Risque Rhyme; Irrawaddy (29 Oct 15) Woman Faces Additional Charge in Facebook Defamation Trial

¹⁶⁸ Myanmar Times (20 Oct 15) Opposition fears social media punishments meted out unfairly

¹⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (20 Oct 15) USDP Official Arrested Over Fake Suu Kyi Image Shared Online

¹⁷⁰ AI (15 Oct 15) Myanmar: Immediately release two people detained for mocking army on Facebook; HRW (17 Oct 15) Burma: Activists Charged for Mocking Military Online

¹⁷¹ US State Department (15 Oct 15) Daily Press Briefing

¹⁷² RFA (19 Oct 15) Myanmar Defends Arrests of Two Activists Following Online Posts

On 28 October, two weeks after the arrests, US-based independent watchdog organization Freedom House downgraded Burma's status in its annual "Freedom on the Net" report to "not free," highlighting the authorities' failure to repeal the Electronic Transactions Law, the vague wording of the Telecommunications Law, and the continued arrest and detention of internet users.¹⁷³

Letpadan crackdown violated international human rights law: Report

On 10 October, Fortify Rights and the Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic released a report on the excessive use of force and human rights violations during the 10 March police crackdown on protestors in Letpadan, Pegu/Bago Division.¹⁷⁴ The report was compiled using evidence from eye witnesses, photographs and videos and made the following findings:¹⁷⁵

- The Burmese/Myanmar authorities did not provide a legal justification for prohibiting protestors from marching to Rangoon/Yangon and banning songs, flags and chants. The authorities' unwillingness to allow the demonstration enhanced the tensions that culminated in the 10 March crackdown.
- Police officers used excessive force against protestors merely exercising freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.
- Police officers committed human rights violations by using unnecessary and disproportionate force on the protestors in their custody.
- The arbitrary detention and prosecution of protestors violates international human rights law protecting freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Since publication of the report, the Burmese authorities have continued to flout freedom of peaceful assembly and expression of Letpadan protestors. On 29 October, All Burma Federation of Students Unions (ABFSU) leader Kyaw Ko Ko was arrested for his involvement in the Letpadan protests after eight months in hiding.¹⁷⁶

Poverty, intimidation and conflict from hydro-electric power displacements: Report

On 5 October, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) released a report on land confiscation and displacement at the Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, a project implemented by the Burma/Myanmar authorities with Chinese, Swiss and British companies. "Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar" was based on a survey of 80 displaced households near the dam project.¹⁷⁷ Hydro-electric power projects are a major source of forced displacement in Burma, and according to the report, dam projects, which often occur in ethnic regions, can be a trigger for conflict due to the increased military presence attached to them and failures to abide by international standards on relocation of communities.¹⁷⁸

The report found that 64% of people felt compelled to accept confiscation of their land and poor compensation from authorities due to intimidation and fear of what would happen if they refused. Fifty-eight of 115 political prisoners behind bars in Burma in May 2015 were arrested for protesting land confiscations, and 86 land activists and 961 farmers had been charged and were awaiting trial, according to PHR and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Freedom House (28 Oct 15) Freedom on the Net: Myanmar

¹⁷⁴ Fortify Rights and Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic (10 Oct 15) Crackdown at Letpadan, Excessive Use of Force and Violations of the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Expression

¹⁷⁵ Fortify Rights and Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic (10 Oct 15) Crackdown at Letpadan, Excessive Use of Force and Violations of the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Expression

¹⁷⁶ Reuters (29 Oct 15) Myanmar student leader arrested amid signs of crackdown; AFP (30 Oct 15) Fugitive student leader jailed in Yangon

¹⁷⁷ PHR (05 Oct 15) Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar

¹⁷⁸ PHR (05 Oct 15) Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar

¹⁷⁹ PHR (05 Oct 15) Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar

Other findings include:¹⁸⁰

- The authorities did not provide households with information at the initial stage on why they had to relocate, why their land specifically was taken, the rules determining compensation levels and their ability to challenge the confiscation in court.
- Ninety-three percent of households surveyed said their overall situation had worsened since they were forced to move.
- Eighty-four percent of households dropped below the poverty line for Burma after the relocation.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UN Special Rapporteur expresses concern for ‘free and fair’ elections

On 28 October, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, submitted a report on her August visit to Burma/Myanmar to the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee.¹⁸¹ Yanghee Lee emphasized that the elections environment and the conduct of the voting itself would be key to determining if they are in fact ‘free and fair.’ The Special Rapporteur expressed particular concern for the prospect of inclusive elections given the disqualification of Muslim candidates, and the disenfranchisement of former white card holders, mainly Rohingya, which she called a “discriminatory” decision. She further described the decision not to allow all international observers access to advance voting, used in large part for military votes, as “disappointing.”¹⁸²

Yanghee Lee warned that the period following elections could see “instability and tensions” if the results are not credible and accepted, and later described the elections as a “watershed moment” for Burma in a press statement. Reiterating the human rights concerns expressed in her August post-visit statement [see *August 2015 Burma Bulletin*], in particular the restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression, the Special Rapporteur stated that genuine elections will not be achieved if these rights continue to be restricted.¹⁸³

ECONOMY

Central Bank of Myanmar revokes foreign exchange licenses to tackle “dollarization”

In an attempt to combat continued devaluation of the kyat through so-called “dollarization”, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) made a statement on 16 October saying that it would revoke foreign exchange licenses, which enable businesses to trade in foreign currency.¹⁸⁴ Since the beginning of 2015, the kyat has dropped by over 20% due to demand for trading in US dollars and the CBM has warned against the increased use of US dollars [see *July 2015 Burma Bulletin*]. From 19 October to 30 November, businesses including hotels, hospitals, and restaurants, must return their licenses and can no longer accept US dollars and other foreign currencies in domestic transactions.¹⁸⁵

CBM Foreign Exchange Management Head and Deputy Director Gen Win Thaw told press that authorities merely want to strengthen the kyat in the domestic economy.¹⁸⁶ Banks may still exchange US dollars and individuals can hold up to US\$10,000 in cash and open foreign currency accounts.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the CBM’s sudden decision to revoke foreign exchange licenses has caused concern among business owners and economic experts. Burmese economy expert Sean Turnbull stated that the

¹⁸⁰ PHR (05 Oct 15) Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar

¹⁸¹ OHCHR (28 Oct 15) Statement by Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar at the 70th session of the General Assembly

¹⁸² OHCHR (28 Oct 15) Statement by Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar at the 70th session of the General Assembly

¹⁸³ OHCHR (28 Oct 15) Statement by Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar at the 70th session of the General Assembly

¹⁸⁴ DVB (18 Oct 15) Foreign currency licenses revoked for govt, private businesses; BBC (20 Oct 15) Myanmar to curb use of US dollar to stabilise domestic currency; Myanmar Times (19 Oct 15) Hundreds of forex licences revoked

¹⁸⁵ DVB (18 Oct 15) Foreign currency licenses revoked for govt, private businesses; BBC (20 Oct 15) Myanmar to curb use of US dollar to stabilise domestic currency; Myanmar Times (19 Oct 15) Hundreds of forex licences revoked

¹⁸⁶ Myanmar Times (21 Oct 15) Central Bank will not return to old ways: senior official

¹⁸⁷ EMG (26 Oct 15) Traders warned to use kyat: CBM boss

immediate and arbitrary revocation of licenses “is as inexplicable as it is counterproductive,” pointing to similarities with the way in which the old Burmese military regime conducted monetary policies.¹⁸⁸

Minimum wage disputes: Workers demand return of employee privileges

Since the implementation of the 3,600 kyat (US\$2.80) daily minimum wage in September, employers have dismissed workers and reduced employee privileges, such as overtime pay [see *August and September 2015 Burma Bulletins*]. As a result, workers have been left with the same or even lower salaries than they had before the implementation of the new minimum wage on 1 September.¹⁸⁹

Since 21 September, hundreds of workers at Han Jen garment factory in Rangoon/Yangon’s Shwepyithar Industrial Zone have protested against a loss of employee benefits and a resulting salary drop.¹⁹⁰ On 5 October, Han Jen worker representatives started a hunger strike to demand full salaries and the return of employee privileges, including overtime pay.¹⁹¹ On 14 October, Han Jen management announced that workers who had not returned to the factory by 17 October would be regarded as having resigned, but workers continued to strike.¹⁹² No agreement has yet been reached, but on 19 October the district arbitration council ruled that five dismissed union members must be reinstated and provided compensation, excluding the union president Kyaw Kyaw Myint.¹⁹³

Other labor disputes have continued in October:

- **8 October:** Workers at a camera lens factory in Maymyo/Pyin U Lwin, Mandalay Division, began a protest to demand return of overtime pay and food and accommodation allowance, as well as the recognition of Saturday and Sunday as a weekend.¹⁹⁴
- **8 October:** Employers at Asia Rose factory in Rangoon’s Hlaing Tharyar Township defied an order from the district arbitration council to reinstate seven of 126 workers who were dismissed on 26 August in response to the implementation of the new minimum wage.¹⁹⁵
- **10 October:** It was reported that over 3,000 Rangoon Opal garment workers resumed work after a three day protest over lost overtime wages, leading employers to promise full salaries.¹⁹⁶
- **23 October:** Workers at World Jin textile factory in Shwepyithar Industrial Zone protested against their South Korean employer who allegedly beat his employees over a dispute concerning overtime pay.¹⁹⁷

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN OCTOBER

2	Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin spoke at the UN General Assembly calling for UN reforms, criticizing in particular the Security and Human Rights Councils, bodies that have called Burma responsible for “widespread and systematic human rights violations.” ¹⁹⁸
3	The International Labor Organization (ILO) told press that it will launch a four year pilot project to eradicate child labor in Rangoon/Yangon, Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady Division and Mon State. ¹⁹⁹
5	Police in Kamaing (Ka Mai) Village in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, confirmed that a body found buried at a “local civil servant compound” is that of Ung Sau Tu Ja, who went missing four months ago while in military custody. ²⁰⁰

¹⁸⁸ Myanmar Times (21 Oct 15) Central Bank will not return to old ways: senior official

¹⁸⁹ Myanmar Times (01 Oct 15) Payday unpleasant surprise for workers

¹⁹⁰ EMG (01 Oct 15) Han Jen workers demand restoration of pre-minimum wage privileges; Myanmar Times (09 Oct 15) Factory hunger strike continues

¹⁹¹ DVB (06 Oct 15) Han Jen factory workers mount hunger strike; Myanmar Times (14 Oct 15) Hunger strikers see no end to pay dispute; Myanmar Times (09 Oct 15) Factory hunger strike continues

¹⁹² GNLM (22 Oct 15) Han Jen labour dispute to enter new negotiations

¹⁹³ Myanmar Times (21 Oct 15) Han Jen dispute rolls on as arbitration fails to tackle pay; GNLM (22 Oct 15) Han Jen labour dispute to enter new negotiations

¹⁹⁴ Myanmar Times (13 Oct 15) Camera factory workers strike over allowance

¹⁹⁵ Myanmar Times (15 Oct 15) Factory defies council order to rehire union members

¹⁹⁶ EMG (12 Oct 15) Strikers return to work

¹⁹⁷ Myanmar Times (23 Oct 15) Workers demand sack for Korean boss after altercation

¹⁹⁸ Burma Ministry of Foreign Affairs (02 Oct 15) Statement by His Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of the Delegation of Myanmar in the General Debate at the 70th United Nations General Assembly; Myanmar Times (05 Oct 15) Foreign minister fires back at UN from Gen Assembly podium; UN News Centre (02 Oct 15) Only through wide-scale reforms will UN keep pace with changing times, Myanmar tells Assembly

¹⁹⁹ Xinhua (03 Oct 15) ILO plans to eradicate child labor in Myanmar

9	Amarapura Township Court, Mandalay Region, sentenced Yadanabon University students Naing Ye Wai, Aung Hsan Oo, Jit Tu, and Nyan Lin Htet to three months in prison under Articles 142, 147 and 505(b) of the Criminal Code and reduced a year-long sentence under Article 18 of the Peaceful Assembly Law to three months, for a graffiti protest; Naing Ye Wai, president of Yadanabon university student union, received an additional three months related to another case. ²⁰¹
9	It is reported that the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence issued a directive to media outlets to stop referring to leaders of ethnic armed groups with honorific military rankings, which the Myanmar Journalist's Network says is not in the military's power to demand, and asked the Irrawaddy divisional government to "to supervise and monitor the media." ²⁰²
14	Fortify Rights and the Justice Trust issued a press release calling on the Burma/Myanmar authorities to drop all charges against lawyer Khin Khin Kyaw, who is representing Letpadan students and was charged after filing a legal motion to hold high-ranking police officials responsible for the violent crackdown at Letpadan in March. ²⁰³
24	It was reported that the Election Commission (EC) tallied 1.03 million submissions by people residing outside their home constituencies to vote from where they are currently residing. ²⁰⁴
24	National Parliament Speaker Shwe Mann signed a statement announcing that National Parliament and both Assemblies will hold their 13th regular proceedings on 16 November in Naypyidaw. ²⁰⁵
27	The EC announced that the final voter lists will be displayed at EC sub-commissions nationwide on 2, 6, and 7 November. ²⁰⁶

Please visit www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php to access Altsean-Burma's full database of chronology entries covering Burma-related events.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN OCTOBER

“Crackdown at Letpadan Myanmar: Excessive Force and Violations of the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Expression” Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic & Fortify Rights
<http://goo.gl/cHMcQF>

“Deadly Journeys - The Refugee and Trafficking Crisis in Southeast Asia” Amnesty International
<https://goo.gl/DyY5J1>

“Disenfranchisement and Desperation in Myanmar’s Rakhine State” ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights <http://goo.gl/jrNfOg>

“Persecution of the Rohingya Muslims: Is Genocide Occurring in Myanmar’s Rakhine State? A Legal Analysis” Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic at Yale Law School & Fortify Rights
<http://goo.gl/dSdoPO>

“Forced Displacements and Destroyed Lives around Upper Paunglaung Dam in Shan State, Myanmar” Physicians for Human Rights <https://goo.gl/i2TGsn>

“Freedom on the Net 2015: Myanmar” Freedom House <https://goo.gl/msQOnX>

““Going Back to the Old Ways’: A New Generation of Prisoners of Conscience in Myanmar” Amnesty International <https://goo.gl/U5fx1G>

“International Religious Freedom Report for 2014: Burma” US State Department <http://goo.gl/sfNDiY>

“Jade: Myanmar's ‘Big State Secret’” Global Witness <https://goo.gl/Fof283>

“Agriculture and Livelihood Flood Impact Assessment in Myanmar” UN FAO, WFP, Burma/Myanmar authorities <http://goo.gl/Luem60>

“East Asia Pacific Economic Update, October 2015: Staying the Course” World Bank <http://goo.gl/86VpCQ>

²⁰⁰Irrawaddy (05 Oct 15) Body of Missing Kachin Man Found, Military Under Investigation

²⁰¹Irrawaddy (09 Oct 15) Students Jailed for Graffiti Protests Sentenced to 3 Months; EMG (12 Oct 15) Yadanabon students get heavy sentences

²⁰²DVB (09 Oct 15) Media faces major dilemma; Irrawaddy (09 Oct 15) Army Chief's Office Issues Nomenclature Directive to Journalists

²⁰³Fortify Rights & Justice Trust (14 Oct 15) Myanmar: Drop Charges Against Human Rights Lawyer KhinKhinKyaw

²⁰⁴GNLM (24 Oct 15) Govt urges diplomats, observers to be cautious about election observation

²⁰⁵GNLM (25 Oct 15) Parliamentary meetings to be resumed on 16 Nov

²⁰⁶GNLM (28 Oct 15) Regional strife bars polls: UEC decides not to hold election in four townships