

FEBRUARY CHRONOLOGY 2018

Summary of the Current Situation:

There are **240** individuals oppressed in Burma due to political activities,

44 political prisoners are serving prison sentences,

75 are awaiting trial inside prison,

121 are awaiting trial outside prison.



Picture from Naing Naing Tun Facebook © 2018



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများ ကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)

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POLITICAL PRISONERS

▪ TRIAL

Trial Continues for Journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo

At their February 1 hearing, Reuters Journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, were denied bail. Arrested in Arakan State under the Official Secrets Act, their ongoing trial has revealed gaps in key witness testimonies due to alleged false testifying on behalf of the police. At their February 6 hearing, it was revealed police allegedly destroyed their preliminary arrest report for the case, and at their February 21 hearing, the prosecution's witnesses provided contradictory details on the whereabouts of the arrest, a point that has further discredited the plaintiff's testimonies. Although they won the prestigious PEN America Barnaby Freedom to Write award on February 12 and calls remain for their release, they continue to be detained at Insein Prison. The next hearing is scheduled for March 7.

[\(1 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(1 February 2018 - RSF\)](#) [\(1 February 2018 - VOA\)](#) [\(1 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(1 February 2017 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(1 February 2017 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(1 February 2017 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(1 February 2017 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(1 February 2017 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(2 February 2017 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(3 February 2017 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(3 February 2017 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(3 February 2017 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(5 February 2018 - VOA\)](#) [\(6 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(6 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(6 February 2018 - Frontier\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 -](#)

[VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(6 February 2017 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(7 February 2017 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(7 February 2017 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(7 February 2017 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(7 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(7 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(13 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2017 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2017 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2017 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(16 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(21 February 2017 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(21 February 2017 - /Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - DVB\)](#)

2008 Constitution Abolishment Protesters Attend Court Hearing

On February 1, Naung Naung and Lay Lay (A.K.A San San Win) attended their first court hearing at Dagon Seik Kan Township Court. The police charged them under Sections 505 (b) and 153 of the Penal Code. In January, Naung Naung and Lay Lay protested the case of former child soldier Aung Ko Htwe. As a form of protest, they allegedly stood on a piece of cardboard made to look like a copy of the 2008 Constitution. The police arrested and detained them at Insein Prison, along with four others. Police have also opened a case and put a warrant out for the arrest of Nay

Zar Tun and Khin Cho Naing, sisters of Aung Ko Htwe, who were involved in the protest as well.

[1 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#)

Lawyer and Protestor Face Trial for Insulting a Public Officer 2.5 Years Later

Trial continues for a demonstrator who took part in the 2015 protests that happened after the passing of the National Education Law, as well as the lawyer who defended the jailed protesters. Although the National League for Democracy (NLD) closed the student protesters' case when they came to power, Lawyer Khin Kyaw Kyaw, and Student Protester, Than Htike, are still being prosecuted by Tharrawaddy Township, Bago Region for insulting a public officer on duty, under Penal Code Section 228. Punishment under Section 228 calls for a maximum six months' imprisonment, a maximum fine of K100,000 (US\$75), or both. Further, Khin Kyaw Kyaw's license will be revoked if she is found guilty. Since September 2015, they have appeared in court 52 times. [\(9 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(13 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Prosecution will Drop Charges on Swe Win if He Apologizes

On February 13, the prosecutor in the case against *Myanmar Now's* Chief Editor, Swe Win, said he will drop the criminal defamation charges if Swe Win agrees to apologize to nationalist monk and leader of the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion (Ma Ba Tha), U Wirathu. According to Swe Win, however, he will not apologize. Swe Win is on trial for charges of defamation under Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law in relation to a Facebook post he shared that was critical of U Wirathu. At his February 26 hearing, Swe Win's lawyer claimed the plaintiff had presented "false evidence" in the case and asked the court to take action. [\(13 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(13 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(13 February](#)

[2018 - RFA\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Plaintiff for a Satire Article Took the Stand at the Dawei Township Court

On February 26, the Deputy Director of the Tanintharyi Regional Government, Aye Lu, gave testimony for the first time in the Dawei Township Court. On November 23 he had filed a complaint under Section 25(b) of the News Media Law due to a satirical article in the *Tanintharyi Journal* that mocked the efforts of an incumbent female administrator by the name of 'Shin Gwan Gwep' in pursuit of re-election. In the article, Shin Gwan Gwep was ridiculed for admitting that she did not know how to run her ward. Lei Lei Maw alleges this refers to an admission she made to local media that she does not know how to run a regional administration. Lei Lei Maw claims this defamed her and her family. On December 21, the Dawei Court allowed the case to proceed. The next court hearing is scheduled for March 12. If the journal is found guilty, the penalty could be up to 1,000,000 kyat (US\$740).

[\(26 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#)

▪ CHARGES

13 Arakanese Charged for involving in Mrauk-U Conflict

On February 20, the Government charged 13 Arakanese under Section 6(1) of the Public Property Protection Act and Section 6(1) of the Public Property Protection Act at the Mrauk-U Township Court, Arakan State for involvement in the Mrauk-U Conflict. The 13 charged were all injured in the conflict when police opened fire at crowds in Mrauk-U Township. Five out of thirteen were treated at the Mrauk-U Hospital and have been evading arrest. The other eight were sent to Sittwe Prison on February 2 while they were being treated at the Sittwe People's Hospital in the prisoners' ward.

On January 16, peaceful protests condemning authorities for banning the commemoration ceremony of the Arakan Dynasty anniversary event turned violent in Mrauk-U Township, Arakan State, leading to seven civilian deaths and 12 injured. The Arakan State probe into the January 16 violence has been suspended due to regional instability.

[\(2 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(3 February 2018 - Eleven\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Aye Maung and Wai Hin Aung Charged with High Treason for Talk Given at Arakan Dynasty Celebration

On February 9, the Sittwe District Court announced Author Wai Hin Aung, and Ann Township MP and former Arakan National Party Leader Aye Maung, have been charged with high treason, under Section 121 of the Penal Code. High treason carries the death penalty, or a life sentence in prison with hard labor. The two had been previously charged under Section 17/1 of

the Unlawful Associations Act and Section 505 of the Penal Code for public incitement. Their next appearance at the district court is scheduled for February 21. At the end of February, AAPP had learned no new information regarding this case. [\(9 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(10 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#)

Former Political Prisoner Arrested in Connection with Sittwe Bombings

Arakan State police arrested seven individuals, including Former Political Prisoner, Naing Soe, in connection with an ongoing investigation into the recent bombings in Sittwe, Arakan State. Remotely detonated on February 24, the bombs targeted the home of a State Government official, the local high court, and a land records office. According to Naing Soe's lawyer, police filed charges under Section 50[a] and [i] of the Counter-Terrorism Law, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years. All seven will remain detained until their March 12 hearing.

[\(28 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(24 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(25 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#)

▪ SENTENCES

Former Child Soldier, Aung Ko Htwe, Sentenced for Contempt of Court

On February 14, the judge presiding over Aung Ko Htwe's case sentenced him to six months' jail time for contempt of court. During his January 31 hearing, Aung Ko Htwe shouted at the judge each time he was asked a question. After the hearing he declared that he would boycott future hearings because he has lost faith in the judicial system's ability to give him a fair trial.

Arrested August 18, 2017, the former child soldier was charged under section 505(b) of the Penal Code after he gave an interview to *Radio Free Asia* (RFA) recounting his experiences as a minor conscripted into the military. If convicted, he faces up to three years imprisonment, a fine, or both. He appeared before the court on February 27, but due his court boycott, the power of his lawyer and all evidence have been revoked.

[\(14 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(27 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese\)](#)

Eight Villagers Receive Sentencing for Associating with RCSS

After a seven-month trial, the Hopong Township Court, Shan State has sentenced eight villagers for associating with and supporting the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS). All eight men were charged with the following: unlawful use of a firearm; unlawful use of a walkie-talkie, illegal import of a vehicle; and attacking the military. The sentences range from one to 10 years.

[\(28 February 2018 - BNI\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese\)](#) [\(28 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#)

■ RELEASES

[RFA/Burmese](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)

Charges Dropped for Arakanese Activist Arrested Under Unlawful Associations Act

On February 14, charges were dropped against a man arrested and detained in Sittwe Prison, Arakan State under charges related to Section 17/1 and 17/2 of the Unlawful Associations Act. Chairman of the civil society group Thingaha Kan Lett Rakhita, Ann Thar Gyi (A.K.A Than Shwe), was arrested on October 15, 2017 for delivering a speech on April 10, 2017 to commemorate the founding of the Arakan Army. Although authorities banned last year's event, Ann Thar Gyi held lectures nonetheless. A lawsuit was filed against him by Light Infantry Battalion #540 under the Unlawful Associations Act in May 2017.

This case follows the August 2017 sentencing of Abbot, Nanda Thara and Khine Ni Min, who were arrested under Section 17/1 of the Unlawful Associations Act in April 2017 for organizing a football match marking the 8th anniversary of the founding of the Arakan Army.

[\(14 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#)

Khaing Myo Htun Release

On February 22, Khaing Myo Htun was released after 18 months behind bars, nine of which were due to detention during trial. As the Deputy Information Officer for the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), he was sentenced under charges related to Section 505 (b) and (c) of the Penal Code for releasing an ALP statement accusing the Military of human rights abuses in Arakan State. The statement included allegations of extrajudicial killings, as well as forced labor.

[\(22 February 2018 - Fortify Rights\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 -](#)

RESTRICTIONS ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Student Protesters Allowed Back in School

Due to meetings between the All Burma Federation of Student Unions and representatives from the Education Ministry, the 56 university students who were expelled last month due to involvement in education budget protests have been reinstated. The students are from Yadanabon, Yamethin, Sagaing, Kanbalu and Mohnyin universities. According to the Education Department's Second Director, Dr. Aung Aung Min, this decision is the best solution for the students. The handling of the protests has sparked concern across the country on rights to peaceful protests for students.

[\(1 February 2018 - Eleven\)](#) [1 February 2018 - The Voice Myanmar/Burmese](#) [2 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [3 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Frontier\)](#)

Farmers Discuss Issues on Farmland Safety

On January 31, farmers held a meeting about farmland safety at Sein Joe Zat Memorial Building, Taunggyi, Southern Shan State. More than 90 people from Taunggyi District, Loilem District and Lin Kay District attended the meeting. According to Lawka Alin Project Manager Tun Aung, they will have a discussion with the southern Shan State farmers representative to discuss farmland safety, and the threats farmers face, and implications of the 2017 Land Acquisition Draft

[Law. 1 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese](#)

Court Charges Four in U Ko Ni Murder, Calls for Arrest of Suspected Mastermind

At the February 9 hearing of the U Ko Ni murder trial, the Yangon North District Court charged four of the men facing trial under various sections of the Penal Code: Kyi Lin faces charges under Section 302(1)(b), for premeditated murder provision; Aung Win Zaw and Zeyar Phyo were charged under Section 34, for co-conspiracy; and finally, Aung Win Tun was charged under Section 212, for knowingly harboring an accused criminal. At the February 22 hearing, Aung Win Tun was released on bail at 50 million kyats (US\$37,500).

The Court has also issued a warrant for the arrest of a fifth suspect, and alleged mastermind of the operation, Aung Win Khaing, who remains at-large. The legal adviser of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and a Muslim, Lawyer U Ko Ni was assassinated outside Yangon International Airport January 29, 2017. The trial has been ongoing ever since.

[\(2 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(2 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(9 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(10 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#) [\(10 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(10 February 2018 - Myanmar Times/Burmese\)](#) [\(12 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(23](#)

[February 2018 - Myanmar Times/Burmese](#) ([23 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese](#))

18 Monywa Township Farmers Receive Land Compensation

On February 2, the Sagaing Division Government Group gave compensation to 18 farmers for the first time after permission was granted from the National Government in Monywa Township. 20 years ago, the Electric Implement Department and Sub-Investigate Department confiscated 11.07 acres of land from farmers for the the Tan Men Ti hydroelectric project at Alon Taung, Kwan village, Monywa Township. The Sagaing Division Government gave one plot of land for 5.5 million kyat (US\$4125) and compensation for 33 land plots. At this time, the acreage of these plots is unknown. There are now only 70 cases left to solve from the original 1000 cases. According to the Central Land Investigate Group, the rest of land issues will be resolved by August 2018.

[3 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese](#)

Bago Region Protests for Abolishment of 2008 Constitution

On February 3, 50 residents held a protest to abolish the 2008 Constitution in Pyay Township, Bago Division. The protesters wore red cross line constitution T-Shirts and tied red rope across their foreheads while holding V9 poster in protest. According to protesters, the 2008 constitution was written without taking the needs of citizens into account, and without federalist, democratic principles. According to protester Naing Cho Lwin, the current Constitution was written in secret and must be abolished because citizens were not consulted.

Following these protests, 100 protesters gathered in Paungde Township, Bago Division to again call for the abolishment of the Constitution. Protesters said they will

hold another demonstration in the western Bago soon.

[3 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese](#) [7 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese](#) ([27 February 2018 - RFA](#)) ([27 February 2018 - Mizzima](#))

300 Farmers Lost Land Due to Naung Cho Township Projects

On February 4, residents held a press conference to launch the book “Invisible Life Behind National Development” in recognition of lost farmland. Although the farmers in the area have land ownership documents, around 300 lost their land because of two projects: the 230 KV electric power cable construction in Naung Cho Township, northern Shan State and the road construction on Naung Cho and Gote Twin Road. Due to these projects, farmers are facing difficulty surviving.

[4 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese](#) [4 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese](#) [4 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#)

Lisu Party Demands KIA release the 28 Lisu People Who They Arrested

On February 5 the Lisu National Development Party released a statement urging the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) to immediately release the 28 Lisu people whom they arrested. In addition to the arrests, the KIA bombed two bridges, one in Sumprabum Town and one in Puta-O Town.

According to the Lisu National Development Party statement, the related organizations will discuss and find solutions for this. According to the Chairman from Lisu Party, Si Pa Lar, the residents are facing difficulties with transportation and food due to the bridge bombings. On February 13, residents protested the rising cost of food due to the increased regional tensions.

[5 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [7 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese](#) [13 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [13](#)

[February 2018 - BNI/Burmese 14](#)
[February 2018 - Irrawaddy 15](#) [February 2018 -](#)

[Eleven/Burmese 19](#) [February 2018 -](#)
[Eleven/Burmese](#)

Farmland Destroyed by Illegal Gold Mining

Farmers in Laungmin Village, Homelin Township, Sagaing Division are dealing with destroyed lands due to waste from illegal gold mining operations near the township. When farmers reached out to local township authorities in December 2017, there was no response. Due to destroyed land, farmers have had to take agricultural loans from the Government of up to K150,000 (US\$112.50), but have been having trouble repaying them due to lack of work. 108 of the 120 farmers in the township have had land destroyed since the operations started. The Sagaing Regional Shan Ethnic Minister, Nan Hmwe Hmwe Khin, will ask the Regional Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation how they can support the farmers in this township.

[\(5 February 2018 - Eleven\)](#) [\(5 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese\)](#)

50 farmers Protest at Thilawa Special Economic Zone

On February 7, around 50 farmers held a protest due to land confiscation and corruption at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Management Committee Office. The farmers had received permission to protest and marched around the SEZ compound. According to protest leader Hla Tun, the SEZ project still needs to give compensation for 2.2 hectares land out of the 100 hectares they confiscated. According to SEZ Management Committee Secretary Dr. Than Than, they will review the land cases and will submit them to the Government. He also stated that there have been no corrupt practices. Thanlyin Township, Rangoon.

[7 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese](#)

Anti-Corruption Commission Received 949 Letters In First Two Months

After reforming the Corruption Commission, an Information Committee Member said 949 letters were received between 24 November 2017 to 31 January 2018. Although the Commission has 566 cases left to review, they released a statement that they are only investigating five cases. One of the reasons for this may be because many of the letters have not followed submission instructions. 147 cases have already been sent to related departments and ministries of States and Divisions.

[8 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese 9](#)
[February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese 12](#)
[February 2018 - DVB/Burmese](#)

Female Journalists Say Access to Information Still Difficult Under Democratic Government

At the 'Women in News' Southeast Asia Summit on February 8, attendees shared the struggles they face as female journalists. According to them, even under the civilian-led National League for Democracy (NLD) Government there are still barriers to women pursuing work as reporters.

In addition to harassment from sources or fellow reporters, female journalists have faced issues because of the restrictions on Burma's media landscape. For instance, news media do not yet have full rights to information or to conduct investigative reporting. At the Summit, journalists discussed specific ways to collectively combat the challenges they face and how to support each other. Other topics of discussion included press freedom in Burma, the influence of social media, and cultural barriers that make it difficult for women to pursue leadership roles.

[\(9 February 2018 - Eleven\)](#) [\(12 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Farmers Held Press Conference for Land Confiscated for the Yae Ta Kon Taung Golf Club Project

On February 10, residents held a press conference urging compensation and

return of extra land taken for a golf club project. They also asked for compensation for crops in Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Division. In 1997, the Mandalay City Development Committee confiscated more than 547.80 acres of land from 82 farmers to build a golf club. The project only used 300 acres for the golf club. According to the residents, the City Development Committee will begin production on another project with the rest of the land; this is the main objection of the farmers.

[10 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese](#)

Right to Freedom of Movement Infringed Upon in Shan State

Since early February, authorities have been restricting road travel of ethnic Wa people in northern Shan State. Authorities have checked identification cards and barred those from the ethnic group from traveling to major cities in the eastern part of the state, such as Kyaingtong, and the border city Tachilek. In the past, Wa people have traveled to these cities for medical treatment and trade. According to United Wa State Army spokesman, Nyi Rang, the Government has failed to give a reason on why travel is being restricted, and there are concerns the Government views the minority group as foreigners. There are currently 900,000 ethnic Wa living in the area in question. In the past they have been able to move freely around the state.

[\(10 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(12 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(22 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - BNI\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Farmers Worry for Land; Submit Letter to Company

In 1999, the Than Shwe Export Company confiscated more than 6,000 acres of land from farmers in Dhan Pin Kown Village,

Kaung Net Village, Pa Day Thar Village, Moe Thisa Village, Sin Tae Village in Minhla Township, Tharrawaddy District in Bago Region. On February 12, farmers submitted a letter asking for the return of the land, but not receive responses. This follows a letter sent in 2017 that had 684 signatures. In November 2017, the Central Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmland and Other Land Committee sent a letter to related Departments to review the cases, but nothing happened.

[12 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese](#)

Police File Complaint with Myanmar Press Council Against Independent Outlet 7Day Daily

In accordance with Article 21 of the News Media Law, Rangoon Division Police sent a complaint letter to the Myanmar Press Council last week against *7Day Daily* due to a recent article claiming the Vice-President ordered the lawsuits against Reuters Journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. The above-mentioned Article states that parties can lodge complaints with the council if “any member of the news media violates the law’s ethics.”

According to the Police’s leaked letter, *7Day Daily* published misleading information about the reason for the suits, added subjective commentary to their article, and failed to accurately report the testimony of the plaintiff, Lieutenant Colonel Yu Naing.

[\(13 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#) [\(14 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese\)](#) [\(15 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(19 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese\)](#)

MNHRC Finds Human Rights Violations at Min Gone Prison

According to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), prison authorities beat more than 20 prisoners at

Min Gone Prison, Hlegu Township, Yangon Division. Prison authorities beat prisoners when they attempt to flee during arrest, as well as when they get into fights amongst themselves while incarcerated. Injuries for prisoners included broken teeth and head injuries. Authorities demanded prisoners to work with an outside brick-making business; however, the MNHRC said the prisoners should do agriculture work and not the outside work.

The MNHRC also found health violations due to poor sanitary standards. The Commission recommends building more toilets for prisoners because the number of prisoners has increased.

[14 February 2018 - Myanmar Times/Burmese](#) [24 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese](#) [24 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese](#)

Police Open Case against Letpadaung Protesters

Police opened a case against Win Kyaw from Moe Kyo Pwin Village, Khin Nyein, Yi Win from Shel Dan Village, Sandar, and San Nwle from Ton Village under Section 19 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division for holding a protest without permission.

On February 16, residents held a protest against the Myanmar Wanbao company due to previous land confiscation issues. Around 50 residents protested holding a Letpadaung Rescue Flag and two coffins which had "Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Company" and "Wanbao Company" printed on them. [17 February 2018 - The Voice Myanmar/Burmese](#)

Township Administrator Bans Medical Treatment for Wounded EAG Soldiers in Northern Shan State

The Muse Township Administrator in

Northern Shan State has banned members of ethnic armed groups (EAGs) from receiving medical treatment in his district. In a letter addressed to the Muse Township Police Force and the general hospital, the Administrator asked that relevant parties "immediately inform the local military battalion" if they become aware of situations where wounded EAG members are seeking medical treatment locally. However, there has been pushback from the general hospital, as well as the police force on this new policy.

Currently, the Kachin Independence Army, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army all have a strong presence in the township.

[18 February 2018 - DVB/Burmese](#) [19 February 2018 - DVB](#) [20 February 2018 - Myanmar Times](#) [20 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese](#)

Groups Urge Investigation into Whereabouts of Two Kachin Civilians Detained by Military

On February 20, Fortify Rights released a statement urging authorities to investigate and release information on the whereabouts of two Kachin civilians who were detained by the Military January 31. Hpaugan Yaw and Nhkum Naw San were reportedly arrested while doing farm work near Khet Para Village in Mansi Township, Kachin State and are IDPs in Mai Hkawng Village. They have not communicated with anyone since their arrest. Two others were taken with Hpaugan Yaw and Nhkum Naw San, but were released a few hours later. [20 February 2018 - Fortify Rights](#) [20 February 2018 - Washington Post](#) [20 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [20 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#)

Park Conservation Effort Infringes Upon Land in Tanintharyi Region

According to a report by the Conservation Alliance of Tanawthari (CAT), conservation plans for two parks in the Tanintharyi

Region could displace 16,000 people living in the area. The report, published February 21, stated that the Government's "protected status" designation of area forests, as well as conservations efforts of international conservation groups could damage the livelihoods of local ethnic populations, and these groups must be consulted before further restrictions are put in place. [\(21 February 2018 - Reuters\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - Frontier\)](#)

CSOs from Dawei Request Information in Upcoming Projects

On February 20, 30 civil society organizations (CSOs) requested that land problems be solved before the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and Seaport Project begin production again. CSOs requested that the company give the public more information on the project. In 2013 the project was stopped due to land confiscation issues. At this time, the project was being implemented by an Italian-Thai Company.

The Regional Government plans to construct a road connecting Dawei Sea Port to the Thai border and will work together with ITD company and a Japanese company for the project. Thant Zin from Dawei Development Association (DDA) asked who would solve the land problems and reiterated that releasing project information is very important to receive before the project starts.

[21 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#)

Burma Receives A Low Transparency International Score for Corruption

On February 20, Transparency International released a corruption report. Burma received a 30 out of 100, with 0 being highly corrupt and 100 less

corrupt. Further, Burma was ranked 130 out of 180 in comparison to other countries. Last year, Burma was ranked 135. According to the Transparency International Corruption Report, Burma's

corruption levels make it the most dangerous for journalists.

[21 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [22 February 2018 - Mizzima/Burmese](#) [22 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese](#)

Land and Crop Compensation Given to Locals in Hpa-An Township for Eindu-Kawkayeik Asia Road

On February 26, a ceremony was held for the second time in Hpa-An Township, Karen State for land and crop compensation. 96 households from five village tracts and seven public places in Hpa-An Township received a total of 1.115 billion kyat (US\$ 836,250) from the Government for involvement in building part of the Eindu-Kawkayeik Asia Road, which was also funded by the Asia Development Bank (ADB). Even though the Karen State Government said that land compensation was given in accordance with the decision of ADB, some are satisfied with the compensation and some are not satisfied. The first-time compensation was given on October 27, 2017.

[\(28 February 2018 - BNI/Burmese\)](#)

Land Compensation Given to Farmers in Nyaungdon Township

On February 26, a ceremony was held to give farmers land compensation in Irrawaddy Division. Irrawaddy Division Parliament Representative Kyaw Sann, Nyaungdon Township Administrator Twin Ko Ko Min, officials, and farmers attended the ceremony. Farmers from Alel Chaung, Sonntanee, Par Hlaee Villages in Nyaungdon Township, Irrawaddy Division received 2.8 million kyat (US\$ 2100) per acre. Farmers' lands were used to build a dam in San King Kyunn Region in

LEGISLATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Government Urged to Update Mental Healthcare Policy

Mental health practitioners have urged the Government to address the need for a national comprehensive mental health care plan. According to psychiatrists, the current system, enacted in 1912, does not address the needs of the country. Although a new bill has been discussed since 2013, it has not yet made it to Parliament. According to data from Rangoon's Mental Health Hospital, throughout the past five years the number of mental health patients has steadily risen. According to psychiatrists, there is little political will to change the current system. This push comes after the release of a recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Sports that found a high number of people in Burma suffer from mental illnesses; however, there is a shortage of psychiatrists around the country, which makes finding treatment difficult.
[\(2 February 2018 - Irrawaddy/Burmese\)](#)
[\(2 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(19 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#)

Vacant, Uncultivated, Virgin Land Reform Management Law Confirmed in Upper House.

On February 9 the Upper House confirmed an amendment to Section 5 (A) of a law that allows landless citizens the right to work on a small amounts of land that are vacant, fallow, and virgin for agriculture and husbandry. Farmers can apply directly to related departments.

[9 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese](#)

MPs Vote to Reform Current Drug Law

At a February 13 Parliament meeting, Members of Parliament voted on reforms to the current drug law. On February 15, the President signed and released the law to the public. According to the reforms, drug users do not have to go to jail, but will carry out community service hours. According to the Secretary of the Public Committee of Parliament, Kyaw Soe Lin, first-time offenders will go to training school. If they do not follow the rules after this, they will receive a community service sentencing.

[17 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese](#)
[17 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese](#)

MNHRC Received the Most Complaints Regarding Land Disputes

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission member, Yu Lwin Aung, said that the most complaint letters in 2017 were land issues regarding Government and Military confiscated lands. He added that the original owners filed complaint letters by demanding the return of their lands from the Township Management Committee, Land Department, and Village Land Department as these groups received the land, but they have not returned it. Moreover, he stated that land disputes between landowners were among the most complaints.

In 2017, the MNHRC received more than 400 complaint letters and 100 out of 400 were on land issues. The second highest category were complaints regarding unsatisfactory police activity. The MNHRC received letters regarding impartiality of judges and denying bail for bailable offenses. He also said that there were also

many complaint letters regarding public service personnel affairs and ward administrator's issues. The MNHRC investigated each complaint and submitted a report to relevant ministries. They will submit their 2017 activities report in March. MNHRC Vice Chairman, Sitt Myaing, said the Government has not collaborated when the Commission

attempted to suggest changes on human rights issues.

[\(18 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#)

NLD Will Attempt to Amend the Constitution During this Term

According to a National League for Democracy (NLD) party central committee member and lower house MP, Aung Soe, the NLD will attempt to amend the 2008 Constitution before ending this term. In late 2016, the current Government promised to prioritize amending the 2008 Constitution, and, according to Aung Soe, is continuing to work toward this goal.

[\(20 February 2018 - Mizzima\)](#)

Amendments to Peaceful Assembly Law Brought to Parliament

According to a proposed amendment to the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, protesters may soon be required to inform authorities of the projected cost, and funders of protests before being allowed to demonstrate. An additional proposed amendment would include a prison sentence of up to three years for "provoking or exhorting others to organize or participate in demonstrations" through bribes with the intention of disrupting the peace and rule of law of the community. The Bill supporting these amendments was submitted to the Upper House on February 19 by National League for Democracy (NLD) MP, Myat Nyarna Soe. If passed, these will be the third round of amendments for the act.

[\(20 February 2018 - DVB\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(20 February 2018 -](#)

[DVB/Burmese\)](#) [\(21 February 2018 - 7 Day Daily/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - Eleven/Burmese\)](#) [\(23 February 2018 - /Burmese\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - Frontier\)](#)

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Judicial Branch Receives Smallest Budget, Leads to Institutional Problems

According to the Chief Justice of Shan State, the judicial branch receives the lowest budget share, which has led to infrastructure and staffing problems.

[\(1 February 2018 - Eleven\)](#)

Free Health Care Center for Political Prisoners Has Opened

On February 3, 88 Generation students, 96 Generation students, and former political prisoners opened the Healthcare Center Political Prisoners at Kar Taw Mi Road, Dagon Myothit 6 Ward, Rangoon. According to Member of Parliament (MP) Phyu Phyu Thin, political prisoners have lacked medical health care, which is why the groups have opened a joint center.

[3 February 2018 - RFA/Burmese](#) [3 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese](#) [3 February 2018 - The Voice/Burmese](#) [6 February 2018 - BBC/Burmese](#) [22 February 2018 - 7 Day](#) [Daily/Burmese](#)

MNHRC Calls for Release of Certain Prisoners to Ease Overcrowding

On February 7, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) issued an open letter to the president to lobby on behalf of prisoners in an effort to ease the extreme overcrowding. In 2017, 30 Burmese prisons held 19,000 more prisoners than the capacity amount. According to MNHRC Commissioner, Yu Lwin Aung, 46 percent of prisoners are incarcerated under unduly long drug charges and should be released. Among others the letter mentions female prisoners, the elderly, and prisoners with disabilities. Political prisoners were not among those listed due to the lack of an accepted definition on the Ministry of Home Affairs' part of what constitutes a political prisoner.

[\(7 February 2018 - VOA/Burmese\)](#) [\(8](#)

[February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(8 February 2018 - Myanmar Times/Burmese\)](#)

More than 100 Inmates Will Sit for Matriculation Exam in March

According to prison officials, at least 100 prisoners from Hpa-an Prison, Myeik Prison, Insein Prison, and Ohbo Prison will sit for the matriculation exam in March. Since 2006, Insein, Ohbo, and Tharrawaddy Central prisons, have offered education opportunities to those incarcerated. Last year, 40 inmates sat for the exam, and 29 passed. Starting this academic year, however, all inmates across the country will be eligible to apply for the exam.

[\(15 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\)](#) [\(26 February 2018 - Irrawaddy\)](#)

Former Political Prisoners Call on NLD Government to Make Prison Reforms

AAPP, along with the Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS) launched a campaign to lobby the National League for Democracy (NLD) Government for better healthcare support for former prisoners. Due to the lack of nutrition, poor living standards, and use of torture across Burma's prisons, many former prisoners suffer from chronic health issues, and have little access to the help they need. Since coming to power, the NLD has done little to provide for the rehabilitation and ongoing needs of former political prisoners.

[\(16 February 2018 - Frontier\)](#)

Inmates Have the Opportunity to Learn Accounting Skills at Ohbo Prison

According to Deputy Prison Director Cho Win Tun, interested prisoners will have the opportunity to learn accounting skills at Mandalay's Ohbo Prison from Kyaw Swar Win Private Accounting Academy teachers.

Inmates who have at least a matriculation education level can enroll in the free course

and will receive a certificate once finished. The course is open to male and female prisoners; currently, 20 prisoners are signed up. Ohbo Prison already offers inmates classes in job-related skills such as sewing, weaving, electronics, and cosmetology.

[\(28 February 2018 - Myanmar Times\) \(28 February 2018 - Myanmar Times/Burmese\)](#)

REFERENCES

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