

Thayet Pyin Village Administrator and villager were charged under 17(1)(2) of the Unlawful Association Act.

Summary of the Current Situation:

345 individuals are oppressed in Burma due to political activity:

33 political prisoners are serving sentences,

78 are awaiting trial inside prison,

234 are awaiting trial outside prison.



Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

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ABFSU

All Burma Federation of Student Unions

CAT	Conservation Alliance Tanawthari
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KNU	Karen National Union
MFU	Myanmar Farmers' Union
MNHRC	Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
MOGE	Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise
NLD	National League for Democracy
NNC	Naga National Council
PAPPL	Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army – South
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
YUSU	Yangon University Students' Union

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POLITICAL PRISONERS

CHARGES

Four Arakan Youths Charged for Murder of Soldier in Rakhine State

On January 14, May Yu Htun, Aung Chay, Khai Bo Bo, and Ye Zaw were indicted by the Sittwe

Court under Article 302 of the Penal Code for the killing of Corporal Phoe Lone, who was shot to death in Sittwe last September 25. Lawyer U Tun Aung Kyaw stated that, “The court decision was based on evidence presented by the police, but I am sure that [the

suspects] were not in the area when the killing happened as they were in company of legislators from Rathedaung Township.” Ko Aung Zaw Lin and Ko Khine Thaw are Arakanese activists and members of the Arakan Youth Conference and Ko May Yu Tun is a member of the Arakan National Party. The three were arrested in October 2018 but later granted bail as there was enough evidence to charge them. However, in November, a fourth suspect, Ko Ye Zaw, was interrogated, reportedly beaten and forced to confess to the crime. All four suspects claimed that they were not at the scene of the crime when it happened, but were later arrested again on January 14. Defense lawyer U Tun Aung Kyaw confirmed that the court accepted the lawsuit.

Villagers Charged After Being Detained over Suspicions of AA Connections

On January 16, the military released 13 of the 15 villagers it detained in Buthidaung township, northern Rakhine state due to suspicions of Arakan Army (AA) connections. The 13 villagers were released after being detained for a one day where they were questioned about any association to the AA. Seven of the villagers are from Pyin Chaung village in Buthidaung township, two are from Apautwa villager in Kyauktaw township, one is from Naypukhan villager in Kyauktaw township, and the rest are travellers. The two that have yet to be released is Maung Than Hlaing, the head of Thayetpyin village, and villager Maung Kyaw Win as both were charged under Section 17(1) and (2) of the Unlawful Associations Act by the Buthidaung township court.

Two Jein Thar Villagers Charged under Section 19 of the Unlawful Associations Act

On January 14, 60 year old Sein Thar Kyaw and 56 year old Sein Oo of Jein Thar village were arrested after a clash took place near Jein Thar village, Rathedaung Township, Arakan State between the Arakan Army (AA) and the military. The two men were later charged under Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Associations Act and were remanded at Rathedaung Township Court. The military arrested them on January 14 while the two

men were going to herd buffaloes and cows. On January 15, the Commander Office reported that the two men will be transferred to a police station in order to have action taken against them over allegations that the two men had been watching the military and informing updates to the AA as they were found with two Samsung mobile phones for telecommunications.

Sithaung Village Administrator Charged under Section 505(a) and (b)

Administrator Mg Thein Nyunt has been charged under Section 505 (a) and (b) of the Penal Code for telling media outlets that 11 villagers had been taken by the military to be used as human shields in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State on December 27. He received a letter on January 2 by Buthidaung Township Judge Nyan Htun to face a trial at the court under Section 505 (a) and (b) of the Penal Code. He has been sent a second letter on January 8 for not appearing before the court.

Vice Chairman of the Marga Charity Charged

Vice Chairman Kyaw Min Sein of the Marga charity has been charged under Section 25 (b) of the Media Law at the Hpa An Township Court on January 22 regarding a live recording of an election of a Chairman and a member of the City Development Committee in Hpa An Township, Kayin State on his Facebook account on November 8, 2018. He was sued by Hpa An Township Administrator Zay Htet Aung. The trial has been rescheduled for January 29 and he has gotten a bail by a Township Judge.

Ten Households Leader Charged in Arakan State

Aung Tun Sein, a Ten Households Leader of Alel Chaung village, Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, has been detained under Section 17 (1) and (2) of the Unlawful Associations Act due to association with the Arakan Army (AA), according to the Lower House MP Kyaw Zan. On January 13, a clash occurred in Alel Chaung village, where predominantly Kamein and Mro ethnic people live, and about 260

residents have been taking shelter at a monastery and Aung Tun Sein was taken in for an investigation.

Village Administrator and Traditional Medic Prosecuted

On January 25, Rathedaung Township Court prosecuted a village administrator and a traditional medic of Raykaungchaung village in Rathedaung Township, Arakan State under Section 17 (1) and (2) of the Unlawful Associations Act. The traditional medic was arrested under Section 58 of the Myanmar Medical Council Law, whereas the Administrator was arrested on December 28, 2018 by the military. Both were taken to the Saytipyin Border Guard Police Station before the Border Guard Police Station transferred them to Rathedaung Myoma Police Station where the Station Commander of the Border Guard Police Station filed lawsuits against them under Section 17 (1) and (b) of the Unlawful Associations Act.

ARRESTS

Students Arrested for Holding Protest at Yadanabon University

On January 2, four students from Yadanabon University were arrested for holding a protest in Amarapura, Mandalay Region. The students were holding the protest to demand that the university would increase security on the university campus in addition to repairing toilets and hiring more cleaning staff on campus. The arrested students were Ko Ye Lin Aung, Ko Phone Myint Kyaw, Ko Myo Chit Aung and Ko Nay Win Kyaw and they protested against the lack of safety and security has led to the killing of a university student a few days prior along with the theft of bikes. They first held protests in November, which led to three students being charged under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law (PAPPL).

TRIAL

Dispute between Yadanabon University Professor and Mandalay Journalists under Investigation

Myanmar Press Council (MPC) has started an investigation based on a complaint made by Mandalay journalists in connection to an incitement made by a Yadanabon University Professor over a conflict regarding the protest of All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) in Mandalay Town. On January 6, MPC has been investigating the journalists as well as a member of the Yadanabon University Students' Union who were involved in the protest.

Three Civilians Appear before the Court

The Deputy Chairman of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Swe Aung Oo, appeared before the court along with two civilians on January 17 for the fourth time under Section 17 (1) of the Unlawful Associations Act at the Mohnyin Township Court, Kachin State. Swe Aung Oo's friends were not allowed to talk to him nor give food to him on the trial day, according to former member of ABSDF Sein Aye.

SENTENCES

Sixteen Farmers Sentenced for Destruction of Property

On January 23, Pakokku Township court in Magway Division, sentenced 13 farmers to three months imprisonment and three villagers, who were over 60 years old, to one month in prison for the destruction of lands. The sixteen farmers from Myitpyar village, including a land owner, were charged in connection to trespassing on land to destroy a building in order to continue cultivating.

CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT

Some Prisons in Sagaing Division in Need of Healthcare

According to Yu Lwin Aung, a member of the MNHRC, inmates need healthcare in the camps of Kalewa Town, Kale Town and Monywa Ton,

Sagaing Division. The MNHRC checked camps in Sagaing Division due to MPs saying that there are concerns over prisoners' health. The MNHRC checked camps and found out inmates from approximately four camps were in need of healthcare. The MNHRC has started checking eight camps since January 2019 while a camp in Mahamyine Taw had also been checked to determine whether inmates have had their fundamental rights abused.

Prisoners in Myeik Township Face Healthcare Difficulties

The MNHRC found out that healthcare is being delayed in some detention centers in Myeik Township, Tanintharyi Division because the Minister of Health does not have enough doctors to send as they do not want to work at the Prison Department despite vacancies being available, according to Yu Lwin Aung, a member of the MNHRC. He said this after MNHRC checked Myeik Prisons and labour camps such as Nat Zin Kone camp, Kyauk Phyu Taung camp, and Sin Phyu Shin camps, where inmates work in quarries and agriculture, in Myeik Township from December 12 to December 14, 2018. Moreover, there is no sewage system which has led to unhygienic conditions with inmates having to defecate in communal areas. The MNHRC also suggested to move HIV patients and TB patients to proper camps. In addition, prisoners have been facing healthcare problems in five Ye Bet camps in Nawngkhio Township, Shan State and the MNHRC suggested to the Ministry of Home Affairs to have an available sewage system and water system for prisoners.

MNHRC Reports Prison Overcrowding to the President

MNHRC has been planning to send a report in connection with inmate population in prisons to the President. MNHRC checked prisons and more than 90 camps in the whole country in 2018. MNHRC member, Yu Lwin Aung says that Myitkyina, Nyaungshwe and Lashio prisons are holding more inmates than twice their capacity and that Mandalay, Moe Yin and Insein prisons are also holding more prisoners than their official capacity.

RELEASES

Two Tinbawgwa Village Builders Released

On January 3, village builders Tun Myint Oo and his wife Ohmar Kyaw in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, were released from Buthidaung Prison. On December 28, 2018, the two farmers were condemned to six months in prison under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code for building a village without permission. The two have faced trial since July and the sentence was counted from the start of the trial.

8 Farmers Acquitted in Land Dispute Case with Businessman

On January 3, eight farmers were acquitted in a land dispute case at a court in Irrawaddy Region's Nyaungdon Township. In 2006, the Irrawaddy Region Peace and Development Council gave 999 acres of land to a businessman in Byaw Tha Lan village tract in Nyaungdon Township. After he failed to develop the land, the original owners started to farm on it the land again in 2014. They were later sued in 2016 by the businessman under the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law and after two years, the trial has finally ended with court acquitting the farmers. Defense lawyer U Nyein Chan Myo stated that the farmers were acquitted because according to the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law, the land automatically goes back to state ownership because the businessman had not used the land for four years. This case marks the first acquittal of farmers sued by a businessman in a land dispute in Nyaungdon Township as most cases end up with farmers either being imprisoned or fined. Another 20 farmers have also been sued by the businessman and his managers and 38 farmers from Pa Long village in Maubin township are facing trial on similar charges for farming on land owned by a private company as well.

RESTRICTIONS ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Rakhine State High Court Rejects Appeal of Arakanese Politician and Author

On January 14, it was reported that Arakanese politician U Aye Maung and author Wai Hin Aung had their appeal to withdraw charges against them rejected by the Rakhine State High Court. The two were arrested in January

last year due to their remarks at the commemoration of the 233rd anniversary of the fall of the Arakan Kingdom to the Burmese in 1785, which was held in Rathedaung Township, northern Rakhine. It was reported that they had expressed support for the Arakan Army (AA), which has been labeled as an

insurgent group by the Government, and were later charged with unlawful association, high treason and defamation by the Rathedaung Township Court. In September 2018, the Sittwe District Court ruled that Aye Maung and Wai Hin Aung be prosecuted for high treason and defamation of the State under Article 122 and Article 303 of the Penal Code, with the charge for unlawful association dismissed. Since their appeal was rejected, the two will now face trial at the Sittwe District Court. If they are found guilty, they could face death sentences or life imprisonment due to the high treason charge with the defamation charge carrying a maximum two years in prison and/or a fine.

Appeal by Reuters Reporters is Rejected by the Yangon High Court

On January 11, the appeal for the Reuters journalists was rejected by the Yangon High Court on the basis that the defense did not provide sufficient evidence proving that the two were innocent or that it was a police set-up. High Court Judge Aung Naing explained his decision by explaining that the reporters' behaviours showed that they had intentions to harm the country. Reuters Editor-in-Chief Stephen J. Alder stated that, "Today's ruling is yet another injustice among many inflicted upon Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. They remain behind bars for one reason: those in power sought to silence the truth. Reporting is not a crime, and until Myanmar rights this terrible wrong, the press in Myanmar is not free, and Myanmar's commitment to rule of law and democracy remains in doubt." The defense has the option to make a further appeal to the Supreme Court in Naypyitaw.

Former Police Captain who Testified for Reuters Journalists Has Release Delayed by Weeks

On January 3, Moe Yan Naing, a former police captain who testified for the two Reuters reporters, was not released as expected due to an alleged mishap by the staff of Insein Prison. Moe Yan Naing's family was told he would be released this month and traveled over 450 miles from Sagaing region to meet him, but found out that he would be freed in February instead. The staff had counted the days he had

been imprisoned wrong, because he had a reduced sentence.

Village Administrators across Rakhine State Submit Resignations

On January 15, around 30 village administrators have submitted resignation letters to their local General Administration Department in fear of being accused of association with the Arakan Army (AA) in Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State. Many of these administrators have started to feel pressure from both the military and the AA to maintain good relations and are worried that they will be potentially sued by senior authorities due to growing tensions between the two parties. These resignations could destabilize the local government as administrators play key roles in providing public services in rural areas.

Tripartite Meetings Takes Place over Eleven Media News Article

On January 10, a meeting was held between the Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Eleven Media Group officials, and the Myanmar Press Council over the news article featured by the Weekly Eleven Journal that led to the charges of three Eleven Media journalists under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code. The chief minister stated that the final remark of the article is incorrect which stated that, "The previous government that had ruled the country for 50 years put public funds in its own pocket. Likewise, the incumbent government whose tenure has not reached five years leaves public money in the possession of an individual person." The chief minister said that this remark is wrongly written as the Directorate of Investment and Companies Administration (DICA) and auditor of the government both stated that no money was under the possession of a single individual person. Eleven Media Group Policy Director U Wai Phyo said that the chief minister's clarification would be featured in the newspaper. In addition, they will also be reporting to the press council about what has been missed, where their sources came from and how they wrote the article.

Schoolteachers and Villagers Detained by Troops in N. Rakhine State

On January 28, the military detained two primary schoolteachers and two villagers for questioning in Ohn Chaung village, Rathedaung Township, Northern Rakhine State. After fighting had broken out earlier in the morning, the Border Guard Police and Army troops searched the entire village. Local resident Ko Maung Htay said that around 200 Army troops came into the village after soldiers have been ambushed by Arakan Army (AA) fighters near the area. The AA later claimed that the troops randomly fire around 70 artillery shells into the forest and arrested Ko Maung Shwe Aye, U Maung Kyaw, U Myat Thein Tun, and Than Win Chay. Local residents and a monk told The Irrawaddy on Tuesday of the events that occurred and confirmed that the military fired on them as it approached the village and have only released teacher Maung Shwe Aye of those who were detained. The fighting has led to 40 local residents escaping to take shelter in a neighboring village.

Activists Protest After Statue of Gen. Aung San Is Put Up

On January 31, activists peacefully protested the erecting of a statue of General Aung San by the Kayah government in Loikaw. The activists stated that the state government should not have put up the statue, or not placed it in a public area, as it was opposed by a majority of the residents. They continued to say that the statue has a political purpose and fails to take into account the feelings of locals and wishes of indigenous people. The activists protested in several locations in the park and have demanded that the government negotiates with them. Kayah State Minister of Planning and Finance U Maw Maw informed protestors that it was a state government project that he had no power over to stop and that the project team will not be meeting with the protestors. Many ethnic communities around Burma have similarly held protests against statues of General Aung San as it has been viewed as an attempt by the central government to impose control.

President's Office States That the Case of Khin Win Has Already Been Closed

On January 1, Win Kyaw complained to the President's Office asking for an investigation of the death of farmer Khin Win, who was shot dead in a conflict at Letpadaung Copper Mine in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, but was told by Superintendent Ngwe Tun that the case had already been closed. The case was originally opened as manslaughter and a court decided to investigate the case under Section 302 of the Penal Code, but the case was later closed by mistake in accordance with the Yinmarbin Tract Legal Office's advice.

Khin Win's sister Khin Mar Aye said that she believes that the response of the President's Office with what happened is not justice for her sister's death.

Athan Releases Summary Report for 2018 Regarding Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Assembly

On January 3, Freedom of Expression Activist Organization (Athan) released a summary list of lawsuits and prosecutions relating to the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly for the year of 2018. There were a total number of 103 cases: 14 under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code, 36 under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law (PAPPL), and 53 under the Telecommunications Law. According to the report, 58% of charges under the Telecommunications Law were regarding free speech such as political criticism, news reporting, defending labor rights and land rights, and criticism of a person or an organization. More information regarding Athan's 2018 summary reports can be found [here](#).

Three Villagers Escape From MNDAA Territory after Unlawful Detainment

On January 9, three villagers including a village headman escaped from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA). The MNDAA unlawfully detained a total number of 16 villagers in Kunlong Township, Northern Shan State on January 6 and forced them to work as porters. The three villagers ran away while awaiting for a boat after two days of long

walking. There are six people who are over their 60s out of the 13 arrested villagers. There was also news that the 13 villagers have been attending military training, according to an anonymous source from the General Administration Department. The military released a statement on January 7 that a total number of 461 residents are taking shelter in Hohli village and more than 80 civilians will arrive on January 9, according to AID Group.

Local in Trouble for Selling T-Shirts with Images of Activists on Monument Day

The shop of Zai Kaung was closed by a police officer in order to stop the selling of T-shirts which had pictures of three Kachin activists, Lum Zawng, Zau Jat and Nang Pu with a sentence written, "We want Free And Fair Judicial System". The T-shirts were being sold at the monument of 71th Kachin State Anniversary on January 10 in Myitkyina Town, Kachin State. The police station had earlier planned to charge Zai Kaung under Section 20 of the Printing and Publishing Law, but later on a negotiated for him force to sign a pact that he would not continue selling T-Shirts.

A Female Labour Activist Arrested in Hpakant

On January 10, an unknown Armed Group arrested labour activist, Pyone Pyone Htay of Wai Khar village, Hpakant Township, Kachin State. She is a member of the Mining Council of Labour Unions and her husband is a jade miner activist. The couple had been arrested for a night in September, 2018 by an unspecified Armed Group and had been warned not get involved in matters that don't concern them, according to NLD Chairman Shwe Thein.

Date Still Unknown for Meeting with Four Northern Alliances over Military Ceasefire Halt

A date has yet to be set to oversee separate negotiations for bilateral relations between four Northern Alliances and the Peace Commission (PC), although theaters have been halted for 20 days already. The Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services announced that military activities in the five

theaters will be stopped in order to oversee separate negotiations with all NCA and Bilateral settlement non-signatories from December 21, 2018 to April 30, 2019.

Complaint Letter Sent to Nay Pyi Taw to be Resolved

A complaint letter has been sent to the President's Office, State Counsellor Office, MNHRC, and Mandalay Regional Government Office in connection to the death of detainee, Aung Aung Thet, according to the family on January 15. On January 2, Aung Aung Thet was detained at police station in Pyi Gyi Tagon Township, Mandalay Division for getting drunk and public disturbance. He got injured and died in a hospital the next day. Superintendent Nay Myo Aung said the he died due to a fight with other detainees after looking at CCTV. He continued to say that there will be a tribunal in order to get the truth. Moreover, Min Thu, Zaw Hlaing, Khaing Lin, and Thura Kyaw who were involved the fight are being charged under Section 303 and 114 of the Penal Code. The family have doubts on the statement of police and believe that he died due to police torture and are distrustful of the tribunal of Regional Police Office.

UWSA Helps IDPs return to their Village

On January 17, a total number of 309 Pa-O ethnic returned home after taking shelter in the land of the United Wa State Army (UWA) due to a fight in Mong Pan Township, Shan State. Residents fled due to two clashes that occurred in December 2018 between troops from the Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) and the Pa-O National Liberation Army (PNLA) and later took shelter at UWSA-owned land.

Mru Ethnic Arrested by Unknown Armed Group

On January 19, Tun Nu, a Mru ethnic and Taung Min Kalar Village Track Administrator in Kyauktaw Township in Arakan State, was arrested by an unknown armed group. When locals asked the military base in the region, they said they did not arrest him. Due to fightings between the military and Arakan

Army (AA), refugees took shelter at Taung Min Kalar Village and Tun Nu was helping the refugees. On January 24, 48 Village Administrators from Kyauktaw Township signed a letter requesting for the investigation of Tun Nu after he went missing and sent copies to Township Administrator Thi Ha, the state government, and to political parties in Arakan State.

Political Activist Protest Against Injustice

On January 18, approximately 50 political activists staged a protest march in Ahlon Township in Rangoon Division. Political activist Naw Ohn Hla said they staged a protest against the dominating use of unjust laws and bias in Ahlon Township. MP Nwe Nwe Win for Ahlon Township said they will review the protest and solve these issues.

Aung Tha Pyay Villagers Prohibited from Protesting

On January 28, approximately 100 farmers who applied for permission to hold a protest against the construction of a coal fired-cement factory, which is near in Aung Tha Pyay village, Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Division, were forbidden by the Mahar Aung Myay Township Police. Their request to hold the protest was not accepted as an ASEAN meeting was being held at that time, according to Superintendent Win Naing.

TNLA Arrest Villagers and Collects Tribute

Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) arrested 18 locals from five villages in Namhkam Township, Shan State since January 8. Moreover, TNLA said they would release them for three million Kyats (\$1,968) per person. Seven out of 18 were released and the remaining 11 locals arrested could not afford money, with many of them being elderly people. Regarding their arrests, Captain Tar Eike Kyaw from TNLA said he did not know that the villagers were arrested even though the TNLA Batalion is active in this region.

Death of Civilian Case Has Yet To Be Investigated

An investigation is being delayed in regards to the death of charcoal driver Myo Win by Police Second Lieutenant Aung Naing Tun in Ottarathiri Township, Naypyidaw, according to the family. According to the wife Nyo Nyo Aye, the family and witnesses have yet to be informed or questioned by the respective court, but also have yet to attend any trial regarding the case. Second Lieutenant Aung Naing Tun shot Myo Win due to an argument over taxation, according to two people who were with Myo Win. Although the police said they investigated Aung Naing Tun individually in accordance with the Police Disciplinary Law, details have yet to be released. The case was first reported to a court in November 2018, but has since been delayed because a judge took a pension. On January 23, the plaintiff will be investigated.

Student Released on Parole after Being Charged under the PAPPL

On January 15, Lashio Technological University Student Union Chairman Sai Kyaw Saw Han was arrested on the campus by about 10 police officers and was later on released on parole in Lashio Township, Shan State for holding a solo protest in December 2018. He held two protests demanding for seven factors to be addressed by the Department of Education Minister which led to him to being charged under Section 19 of the PAPPL and considered a fugitive by the Lashio Township Court for breaking the law.

Three Thamehla Villagers Beaten by Military

Three villagers of Thamee Hla village in Rathedaung Township, Arakan State had to receive medical treatment in Rathedaung Hospital on January 27, due to injuries they received by members of the military. The troops ran into the village on January 26 and took four men from the village. Three out of the four were kicked and beaten by troops. They were tied up at the school and were later asked whether they were connected with Arakan Army (AA), then they were later released.

According to residents, the military also took gold and money which belonged to the residents. Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun from the General Information Committee said that it was members of the police force who ran into the village and that he has not heard anything about the arrest of residents and collection of their properties.

Villages Struggle with Electricity Cut Offs

On January 28, 13 farmers of Sa Gyi village appeared before the court at the Aunglan Township Court for the fourth time, after being charged under Section 114 and 353, in relation to a protest against an electricity project in Aunglan Township, Magway Division. The reason for the protest was because villagers have faced difficulties as the village has been cut off from electricity for over three months, according to villager Aung Zaw Win one of the farmers

MNDAA Takes Eleven Villagers for Forced Recruitment

On January 27, eleven villagers from Namgyinsan village in Kunlong Township, Northern Shan State, were forcibly recruited by MNDAA to serve as soldiers. There are total number of 326 villagers of Kokang ethnicity and Myaung-Si ethnicity from Namgyinsan village and Laungkhine village who have been fleeing due to forced recruitment.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Over 1700 Child Soldiers Reunited with Parents

Radio Free Asia reported that more than 1,700 child soldiers have been reunited with their parents and around 800 military officers and other authorities have been punished for recruited and using child soldiers. On January 17 at a workshop in Naypyidaw, Colonel Tun Tun Win of the Ministry of Defense stated that the army has taken action to prevent the use of child soldiers in Burma in adherence to regulations of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Specifically, he said that the military “has taken action from 2007 to 2018

against a total of 379 military personnel, including 64 officers and 315 other ranks in accordance with military discipline.”

Parliament Votes to Form Committee To Propose Amendments to Constitution

On January 29, Parliament overwhelmingly voted to form a committee to propose amendments to the constitution. The proposal was introduced by the National league for Democracy (NLD) party and while those 397 voted in favor of the measure, there was opposition from military lawmakers who did not agree with the proposal and refused to vote. NLD legislator Aung Kyi Nyut, who submitted the proposal, stated that the intention is to form a joint committee of lawmakers from different parties in order to “work transparently on a draft law systematically and speedily”. The results of this new committee will decrease the political power of the military if specific parts of the charter changes.

Plans to Reduce Prisoner Numbers in Prisons

The Government has been drawing plans to form a Prisoners Reduction Group in order to reduce overcrowding prisoners number, according to member of MNHRC Yu Lwin Aung. The MNHRC and Assistance Association for Political Prisoner (AAPP) have suggested a number of recommendations to decrease the number of inmates in prisons and address issues that arise from the overcrowding of prisons beyond their intended capacities. For more information, see AAPP’s latest report ["Prison Overcrowding and Need for Urgent Reform"](#).

Land Rights

Negotiation over Land Compensation Issue Still Unresolved

A land compensation issue on Ngwe Saung shore in Irrawaddy Division will be reported under the Land Policy because it is still unresolved despite negotiations, according to Minister of Regional Development Kyaw Myint. The original farmers reported the case to the

Regional Government in order to receive compensation for the building of twelve hotels on Ngwe Saung shore in 2000. While there was a negotiation between the entrepreneurs and farmers in front of the Regional Government in order to provide proper compensation, the issue has yet to be resolved.

Struggle to Return Confiscated Land to Farmers Immediately

On January 4, Deputy Tin Myint of the Union Ministry Office said at the 71th anniversary of Independence Day, which was held in the City Hall in Naypyidaw, that it will be a struggle to be able to return confiscated land to farmers immediately as the Ministry Office uses confiscated land for the state, defence, security, education, people, and health. He continued on to say that they will strive to return unused land to farmers as soon as possible.

957 Land Confiscation Cases Resolved

On January 11, according to a member of Regional Government's Ministry of the Agriculture, Livestock, Natural Resources, and Environment, Tin Aung Win, there have only been 957 cases of land confiscations that have been resolved by the end of December 2018 out of 1,239 complaints that had been sent to the Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands in the Irrawaddy Division. The committee has been forced to resolve the other 287 cases in order to be done immediately.

Company Prohibits Farmers from Ploughing on Confiscated Land

On January 11, farmers of land seized by Shwe Than Lwin Company attempted to plough their land before being stopped by the company in Ywangan Township, Southern Shan State. The military confiscated the farmers' land which was passed down through generations in 1994 to 1995. The land was transferred to the company by the military in 2011. The farmers started ploughing because they had not received any compensation in accordance with the 1894 Land Acquisition Law and the company had not implemented the project following the 2012 Farmland Law. The issue continues to be unresolved with the land policy of 2018. Farmers had reported twice to the General Administration Department that they would start cultivating on the land again in February 2016 and September 2018 and while authorities have promised to hold a negotiation for farmers, it has yet to happen.

Residents Protest Against U Paing Company

On January 18, more than 100 residents demonstrated against the Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Limited (UMEHL), commonly known as U Paing, and demanded to receive compensation in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Division. The company confiscated over 1,100 acres land, which belonged to more than 183 farmers from Pyin Taw, Htan Tapin, Chaungkan, and Thale Oo villages in Kanbalu, in order to build a sugar factory and alcohol distilleries. Farmers demanded for the return excess land along with the Land Ownership Title and compensation relative to the market price.

Military Plans to Confiscate Land

On January 18 at Thit Yar Shooe Kone Monastery, Light Infantry Battalion(LIB) 422 based in Moebyel Town in Southern Shan State held a meeting with farmers from Thit Yar Shooe Kone Village, Moebyel Village Tract to erect the signs of LIB 422 on 450 acres of lands which were owned by the farmers. The farmers objected this offer because they were concerned about losing their lands as they depend on it for their livelihood. A military officer from LIB 422 said they will carry out this plan and that farmers can continue to cultivate, but should inform the military if they use the lands.

Press Conference Held by Farmers in Pyin Oo Lwin

On January 20, farmers whose land were confiscated and who have been charged held a press conference in Naung Lone Village, Pyin Oo Lwin Township in order to take action against a land confiscation committed without accordance with the law in Pyin Oo Lwin Township. The conference was led by Monk U Pamokkha, also known as Magway Kyaung Sayadaw, and farmers from approximately 15 villages in Pyin Oo Lwin District participated in the conference. Farmers who have been facing trial and land rights activists released a statement in order to resolve land confiscation and their losses in accordance with 52 policies which were amended by the Central

Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands.

Taikkyi Residents Demanded to Return Confiscated Land

Residents held a press conference in order to receive confiscated land which was seized by the military about 25 years ago in Taikkyi Township, Rangoon Division. Although residents had demanded for the land since 2013, the dispute had not yet been resolved until today. Military Battalions such as #707 Battalion, #708 Battalion, and #14 Battalion seized 1,800 acres land in Taikkyi Township in 1993 to 1994. The military has been renting out the land to entrepreneurs, according to a resident Khin Aung.

Residents Protest Against Expansion of Urban Areas

On January 25, 500 farmers held a march to protest the Chin State Government's expansion in the area to develop an urban project in Hakha Town, Chin State. Farmers demanded that the Government stops any urban project that has no transparency, that they protect the right to farmers, promote farmers' livelihoods, take action in accordance with direction of the Land Law which is established by National Government, and finally return confiscated land to the original farmers immediately.

Yegy Farmers Demonstrate Against the Delay in the Reallocation of Land

On January 30, more than 150 farmers protested due to the delay in the planned allocation of the 1,300 acres vacant land to landless farmers in Yegy Township, Irrawaddy Division. The Central Land Management Group in Nay Pyi Taw and Government group were directed to allocate the land to farmers. The land was returned by the Department of Industrial Crops Development which is under

the control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Department. Farmers had protested once in 2016 and are protesting again in Yegy Township because no progress has been made.

Farmers' Land Ruined due to Oil-Palm Company Project

The seizures of farmers' land have been increasing due to a project by the Oil-Palm Company in Chaung Hlamu village and Ayetharyar village, Tanintharyi Township, Tanintharyi Division, according to Civil Society Organizations and farmers. The company started implementing its project in 2018 in the two villages. Farmers' crops have been destroyed, land which belonged to farmers have been confiscated, and farmers have even claimed to have been threatened. Farmers had been cultivating on the land for almost 20 years.

Press Conference Held by Farmers Over Land Confiscation

On January 17, local farmers held a press conference over the confiscation of 100 acres of farmland in Laydaunkkan Village, Dagon Myothit, Rangoon Region. Earlier in January, some company staff and servicemen from Garrison Engineering forcibly put posts on land plots owned by about 40 farmers in Laydaunkkan village, which led to a clash between the two groups. Some farmers face lawsuits under Section 6 (1). On May 22, 2018, military officials were also stopped from growing trees on land plots after farmers filed a complaint to the office of Region Chief Minister and the Central Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands. The farmers demanded at the conference to stop fencing and for the return of their land.

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