

# MARCH CHRONOLOGY 2020

## Summary of the Current Situation:

**615** individuals are oppressed in Burma due to political activity:

**92** political prisoners are serving sentences,

**124** are awaiting trial inside prison,

**399** are awaiting trial outside prison.

**WEBSITE**

**TWITTER**

**FACEBOOK**

Five Aung Thabyay Villagers were sentenced to five years imprisonment with hard labor



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**Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)**

**နိုင်ငံရေးအကျဉ်းသားများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း**

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# ACRONYMS

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

# POLITICAL PRISONERS

## ARRESTS

### **Army Arrests Village Administrator and Civilian in Arakan State**

On March 2, the army arrested a village administrator, Kyaw Mya Sein, and a civilian, Yan Aung Chay, in Naram Village in Minbya Township from Arakan State. The two were arrested while stopping a fight between drunk people at a wedding in their village, according to Khin Oo Kyi, daughter of the village administrator.

### **Army Detains Ten Civilians in Arakan State**

On March 16, ten civilians in Tinma Village in Kyauktaw Township located in Arakan State were arrested. Before the arrests, 50 civilians were taken away to a hilltop where the military was stationed, and then 40 were released half an hour later. The army detained the other ten whose names are Aung Nyunt, Tun Win Maung, Yin Maung, Than Maung Tun, Maung Win, Maung Win Chay, Maung Kyi Lin, Maung Win Pane and 15-year-old Tun Tun Wai.

### **Nine Civilians Arrested in Kyauktaw Township**

On March 19, the army arrested nine civilians in Mrauk Daung Village, Kyauktaw Township in Arakan State on suspicion of association with the AA. The arrested were Than Naing, Kyaw Tun Hla, San La Tun, Tun Win, Sein Maung, Thar Tun Aung, Hla Maung Thein and Maung Thein, who is from Mrauk-U Village and works as a carpenter in Mrauk Daung Village.

### **8 Men from Tin Ma Village in Kyauktaw Township Arrested by Army**

On March 13, soldiers arrested 8 people from Tin Ma village in Kyauktaw Township on suspicion of association with the AA. Several villagers, including children and elderly, were forced to gather under a tree; then the 8 men were forced to strip and were blindfolded with their clothes before being taken away. On March 14 there had been no news concerning the fate or whereabouts of the arrested. Family members have expressed their concern and fear over the wellbeing of their loved ones. Those arrested from Tin Ma village have been named as Maung Sein Gyi, Kyaw Win Maung, Hla Kyaw Gyi, Maung Than Soe, Saw Shwe Than, San Thar Maung, Maung Mya Aye and Maung Tun Sein.

### **Two Young Men Arrested at Checkpoint Sittwe Township**

Two men, Nay Lin Htay, 24, and Maung Saw Aye 28, from Ain Tin village from Ponnarkyun Township in Arakan State, were arrested by the police and army at the checkpoint on Kyauktan Gyi bridge in Sittwe Township on March 5. One person from Kyauktan Gyi village said that the two, when they approached Tatmadaw troops and police officers on the bridge, did not stop the motorbike and attempted to drive off. Consequently, shots were fired by the army, and they were arrested. According to Colonel Min Thant, Minister of Security and Border Affairs in the Rakhine State Government, the arrested persons had connections to the Arakan Army (AA).

### **13 Arrested and 4 Found Dead after Army Convoy Attack by AA in Mrauk-U Township**

On March 3, the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services released a statement saying 13 male suspects have been arrested after fighting occurred near Myaung Bway village in Mrauk-U Township in Arakan State. The statement said security forces fought back against Arakan Army (AA) troops as the AA ambushed an army convoy after carrying out remote mine attacks on the group at a location about 1,5 km west of Myaung Bway village on February 29. During the attacks, some military officers and soldiers of

other ranks were injured, two vehicles were damaged, as well as 9 locals were killed and 18 others injured. It added that the army seized the bodies of two AA members and arrested 13 men including Tun Tun Win, son of Sein Tun Aung, on that same day.

According to preliminary interrogations, some of the arrested people had reported to the AA the activities of military columns and vehicles along the Minbya–Mrauk-U–Kyauktaw road and were involved in attacks on military forces. Locals said the Tatmadaw arrested a total of 13 people — five people including Tun Tun Win from Shwe Hlan village and eight people from other villages. The bodies of Maung Kyaw Khaing (36) from Lat Than Chay village, Maung Than Htay (39) from Kywal Tel village, and Habib Ar Laung (52) from Bu Ta Lone Muslim village were found on March 2, and the body of Maung Saw Hlaing (47) from Shwe Hlan village was found on March 1. Locals said the men were among those arrested by the army. The army, however, did not say anything in its statement regarding the four bodies discovered.

### **Police Arrest Villagers After Clash Over Chinese Cement Plant Protest in 2019**

On March 22, Police fired their guns during a raid in and arrested more than 10 residents who had protested against a Chinese-backed coal-powered cement factory in May 2019. Since the protest several residents have been arrested or are awaiting trial while in detention. Others who fled to avoid arrest are considered fugitives and are being sought by police.

### **Army Arrests Village Headman in Eastern Shan State on Suspicion of Association with RCSS**

A village headman and his son were arrested on suspicion of association with Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) by the army after government forces clashed with the RCSS in Mongton Township, eastern Shan State during the last week of March. Combined forces from the three battalions under the Mong Hsat-based Military Operations Command 14 attacked an RCSS military camp near Mong Eis village on the morning of March 25. The army then detained the headman and his son, the RCSS confirmed. The son was released a few days later; however, his father remains in custody.

### **CID Arrests Editor-in-Chief of Voice of Myanmar**

On March 30, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested Nay Myo, a.k.a Nay Myo Lin, the editor-in-chief of Voice of Myanmar news agency based in Mandalay in his home for broadcasting interviews with Arakan Army (AA). After the arrest, witness material was seized from the press office of Voice of Myanmar news agency and the case was filed at the Chanmyathazi Township Court. Regarding the broadcast of the interview with AA's spokesman on March 27, Mandalay's Deputy Police Chief Khin Maung Win filed suit under Section 50 (a), 52 (a) of the Anti-Terrorism Law at the police station no.10 in Mandalay.

## **CHARGES**

### **Channel Mandalay TV Journalist Charged with Four Counts of Penal Code**

On March 13, journalist Aung Kyi Myint, a.k.a Nanda, was charged under Article 147, 333, 332 and 114 of the Penal Code at Pathein Township Court in Mandalay Division. Aung Kyi Myint is a journalist for Channel Mandalay TV based in Mandalay and he was arrested during a live TV broadcast about police shootings during protests around a coal-fired power plant in March 2019. Aung Kyi Myint was then charged by Myo Nyunt Than, Police Chief in Pathein Township.

### **Environmental Activist Sued and Charged for Defamation against the State**

A court in Hpa-an Township in Kayin State has issued an arrest warrant for Saw Thar Baw of the Karen Rivers Watch Network on charges of defamation against the state in accordance to Section 505(b) of the Penal Code on March 6 for his involvement in a traditional prayer ceremony on January 17 to advocate for the protection of local water resources against pollution from coal-powered cement factory in Hpa-an's Myaingkalay District.

On March 6, local police went to arrest Saw Tha Boe, who works for Karen River Watch, by going to his house, but he was not at home. Police searched his house and questioned members of his family. In an interview with Karen News on March 7, Saw Tha Boe said he knew nothing about the court orders. He said he was only made aware of the case against him when a colleague told him police had searched his house to arrest him. He said he did not receive any notice letter from the court and was told the court hearing is scheduled for March 10, which due to a trip he would not make it.

### **Charges Against Rakhine Parliamentarian Filed**

The military has leveled charges against a member of the national parliament under Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. On March 5, Lt Colonel Pyae Sone Aung from Military Operations Command (15), Buthidaung, brought the case to Buthidaung Court accusing National Assembly MP Maung Kyaw Zan of reporting false information to Reuters about a fatal shelling in the Rakhine State.

On February 25, two women were killed and seven injured in the shelling of Kin Taung, a Muslim village in Buthidaung. The Arakan Army and the military traded blame for the incident but neither accepted responsibility. As parliamentary representative of Buthidaung Township in Rakhine State, Maung Kyaw Zan personally visited the hospital where the injured civilians related that the shell was fired by the military. He then passed this information on to Reuters. According to Maung Kyaw Zan, the news agency is also reportedly facing related charges.

### **Army Files Charges Against Villagers and Chief in Hsihseng Township over Land Issue**

An army officer filed a criminal case against four villagers and a village chief in southern Shan State's Hsihseng Township, on claims that they destroyed a fence being built by the military on confiscated land. The fence was built on March 6 on the road near Kawng Tayoe village in Nawng Kyaw village tract under order of the Eastern Military Command. On March 9 the four leaders of Nawng Kyaw, Pin Sone, Mya Kantha and Aung Chan Tha villages visited the fence after hearing that it was becoming difficult for villagers to travel on the road. San Win Maung, village headman of Aung Chan Tha, recounted that villagers had removed some of the fence as the military had extended the road to accommodate more travel. But they did not destroy it, he claims, and piled the pieces of wood they removed nearby the road.

Officer Maj Naing Kyaw Zin from Light Infantry Battalion 424 filed charges against San Win Maung and villager Cho Cho Win for aiding other farmers to dismantle the fence under violation of Articles 353, 429 and 447 of the Penal Code- which include allegations of disturbing official duties and destruction of property. Police from Hsihseng informed the two of the charges against them on March 13 which they will face in court.

### **Two Men Granted Bail after Charges over Unauthorized Public Meeting in Kyaukphyu Township**

On March 26, Tun Kyi and Chan Maung were released on bail at 3 million kyat (2,143 USD) per person after being questioned and charged under Section 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Law for organizing a public meeting about the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on March 20 at Kulabar village in Kyaukphyu Township, which was attended by around 500 people, including two lawmakers. On March 23, Kyaukphyu Township administrator, Soe Moe Kyaw, submitted a complaint against them to police for arranging a public meeting without authorities' permission, according to Tun Kyi. During the village-level meeting, demands were put forward intended to ensure that local populations are not negatively affected by the SEZ project, including recognizing existing land-sharing custom according to law; meeting with locals to reach an agreement before starting to build the SEZ; creating job opportunities for fishermen whose work has been affected by construction of the deep-sea port; and examining trade and registration issues related to the ownership of tidal mangrove forests claimed by locals.

## **DISAPPEARANCE**

## **Two Civilians Missing in Minbya Township**

On March 1, Than Shwe and Maung Win Shwe from Pharpyo Village, Minbya Township in Arakan State, went missing after shopping in Minbya Township.

## **A Civilian Missing During Fighting in Mrauk-U Township**

In Atokethalma Village in Mrauk-U Township, Arakan State, San Shwe Than, a.k.a Athan Chay, a local farmer, went missing during the fighting on February 29. Some villagers witnessed that San Shwe Than sustained leg injuries and two soldiers carried him, said Mya Hnin Wai, San Shwe Than's daughter.

## **Three Men Missing from Kyauktaw Villages**

Mey Toke Chey, (age 58) and his son, Than Tun Maung (32) from Mar Lar village and Shwe Maung from Det Hpyu Township, Arakan State have gone missing. The three were last seen on March 22 following their return to Mar Lar village which had been deserted due to military clashes with the Arakan Army nearby. Tun Thein Maung, the youngest son of Mey Toke Chey, said they had gone back to retrieve some clothes when the military arrested the three men and took them away. The families have not seen or been in contact with the men since. Tun Thein Maung reported the disappearances to the Kyauktaw Police Station and the Arakan National Party as well as the State Speakers and the Minister for Border Affairs and Security- since they have been unable to contact the military directly. The families say the three men are associated with the Kyauktaw-based military.

## **Mro Woman found dead, two others still missing in Maungdaw Township**

One of three women reported missing from a village in Arakan State's Maungdaw Township was found dead on March 13 with her throat slashed, according to the administrator of Thupanna village-tract.

Three Mro women from Baung village in northern Maungdaw Township went missing on March 13 after they went to harvest chilis at a farm near their village. Later that evening the body of 17-year-old Ma Saung Paung was found with her throat slashed in a forest more than a mile from the village. Nearly a week later the other two women, Daw Taung Shi, and Ma Htaung Lone are still missing, despite a coordinated search effort by village residents and security forces nearby.

## **TRIALS**

### **Court Granted Bail to Buddhist Monk Sandita**

On March 5, Pyi Gyi Tagon Township in Mandalay division granted bail for 5 million kyat (3,584 USD) to the Buddhist monk Sandita, who has been charged under Section 66 (d) of the Telecommunication Law. On May 27, 2019, Lieutenant Colonel Than Zaw Oo filed a lawsuit against Buddhist monk Sandita under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code, claiming Sandita criticized the military on social media but the court dismissed the case on July 27, 2019. Then Sandita was again charged under Section 66 (d) of the Telecommunication Law.

## **RELEASES**

### **Naw Ohn La and Three Other Activists Released**

On March 16, Naw Ohn La, U Nge, Sandar, and Maung Oo were released. They were sentenced to one month imprisonment under Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act by Myawaddy Township Court for demonstration without permission on February 17, 2020. U Nge, Daw Sandra and Maung Oo took the lead in the protest of Naw Ohn Hla, chairwoman of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom.

## **SENTENCES**

### **Army files Lawsuit against Reuters Lawmaker**

This month several military lawsuits against a local lawmaker in the Rakhine, Reuters News Agency, The Irrawaddy News and its Burmese edition editor, U Ye Ni were accepted by a Rangoon court and later dropped. Each case was filed under violation of the Telecommunications Act, Article 66(d) for news coverage of conflict in the Rakhine State which cast the military in a negative light. The charges against the Irrawaddy, and editor U Ye Ni, were filed April 2019 in response to his reporting on fighting in Mrauk-U, Rakhine State. The charges against Reuters and a lawmaker came in response to coverage of two Rohingya women killed in the Rakhine by an artillery shelling in January of this year.

On March 16, Rangoon's Kyauktada Court accepted the lawsuit against the Irrawaddy after a year of stalling with hearings set to begin, and U Ye Ni granted bail the same day. On March 18 after pressure from the Myanmar Press Agency, the military withdrew its lawsuits against the editor. The lawsuit against the lawmaker has not been removed.

### **Youth Leader and Activist Sentenced to 15 days in prison**

On March 24, Ko Than Hla was sentenced to 15 days imprisonment under Article 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Act at Sittwe Township Court. The Rakhine youth leader and political activist (also known as Min Bar Chay) led protests demanding justice for those unlawfully detained, tortured, and killed during the conflict in the Rakhine State. In January 2018 he protested in front of the Rakhine State Government in Sittwe against the killing and wounding of civilians by Police in Mrauk Oo who fired shots into a protesting crowd the month before. Last July he demonstrated with other Rakhine youth activists in Sittwe's U Ottama Park to demand justice for civilians who were tortured and died during interrogation. According to the prosecuting attorney, U Aung Sit Min, Ko Than Hla faced charges of protesting without permission for both of these cases, but was only liable to legal proceedings for protesting in front of the Rakhine State Government; for which he was sentenced the 15 days.

### **Court Sentences Nine Farmers to Nine Months**

On March 3, Aungmyethazan Township Court in Mandalay division sentenced nine farmers and land activists to one month imprisonment under Section 20 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act. The total of 11 farmers and land activists protested on land confiscation in July 2019 and they were sued under Section 20 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act by the military. Nine of them faced trial and they were sentenced while the other two did not appear in court.

### **A Member of Parliament Sentenced to Six Months Imprisonment**

On March 13, Tin Soe, parliament's member of Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was sentenced to six months imprisonment under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code at Pyawbwe Township Court in Yamethin District, Mandalay Division. In December 2018, Nyi Nyi Lwin, Vice-Chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD) filed a lawsuit against Tin Soe under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code at the Pyawbwe Township Court, claiming that Tin Soe used terms of disrespectful to the government, preached on religious and racial issues at a public meeting.

### **Karenni Farmers Fined and Sentenced By Demoso Township Court**

On March 13, Loikaw and Demoso Township Court in Kayah State charged a fine and sentenced 41 Karenni farmers who were sued by the military in 2019. The farmers who have been fined were released with allowance to withdraw their detention. The farmers were from Thaminepakyal Village, Dawmukalar Village, Myenikone Village in Loikaw Township, and they were sued by officials at the Major and Colonel level from 250th and 356th Light Infantry Battalion, and farmers of Dawsoshay Village were sued by the 360th Light Infantry Battalion. The 356th Infantry Battalion and 250 Light Infantry Battalion came in around 1990 in Loikaw Township, and they confiscated the land from Dawmukalar, Myenikone, and Thaminepakyal Villages to set up camps.

### **Seven Students Sentenced to One Month Imprisonment over Demonstration against Internet Blackout**

On March 15, seven out of nine students accused of leading a demonstration in February demanding the restoration of internet access in nine townships of Arakan and Chin states were sentenced to one month in prison with hard labor by a court in Yangon. They were charged under Section 19 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law at a court in Yangon's Kamayut Township on March 5. They were previously detained for questioning on February 24, one day after the protest in Yangon, but were subsequently released pending a formal arraignment.

### **Five Aungthabyae Villagers Sentenced to Five Years for China Cement Factory Protest**

Five Aungthabyae villagers were sentenced to five years in prison each on March 17 by a court in Patheingyi Township on charges of destroying a factory building and vehicles during a protest in May 2019 against a Chinese-backed coal-powered cement factory in Mandalay region. An official from the Chinese company had filed charges against those sentenced for illegally using explosives and destroying property.

The defendants' attorney claims that the CCTV footage used against the five villagers during the trial was faulty. Furthermore, the sister of Tun Myint Win, one of the villagers, stated that the court did not address the authorities' mistreatment of the accused as they awaited trial. She said that her brother had been killed in prison while he was being held during investigation.

Some villagers were tried during an earlier trial, while others face additional charges at another court session scheduled for April 3. Some have said that the charges are unlawful and that they will not attend. Currently, nine Aungthabyae residents are being detained in prison, while 33 others accused of wrongdoing during the protest have been declared fugitives.

## **CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT**

### **Two detained journalists released in Kayin State by Border Guard Force after Abuse**

On the evening of March 5, two journalists who were detained and allegedly tortured during interrogation, were released by Border Guard Force (BGF) troops in Myawaddy Township of Karen State. The two were Naw Betty Han, a reporter for Frontier Myanmar, and Mar Naw, a photojournalist for Myanmar Times. They were taken into custody in Myawaddy when ununiformed guards at a building compound (described as wearing black suits and armbands with Chinese letters) spotted the journalists taking a picture of a construction site for a new casino. When the guards confronted them, the two deleted the photos as they were ordered to, but were later forcibly blindfolded and taken to a rubber plantation where they were interrogated by armed men.

Ko Mar Naw recalled being hit repeatedly and kicked in the face until his nose bled while others tried to cut his long hair and another person held a bayonet close to his neck. When Naw Betty Han tried to explain that they were journalists, and called out the names of BGF majors and officers she had previously interviewed, she was slapped in the face and accused of taking photos of their army outpost. The reporters were then taken to a small prison enclosure in the jungle where they were held for a little over a day before they were taken to an office to meet BGF officers and released on March 5.

Leader of the Karen BGF, Colonel Saw Chit Thu, claimed that no instructions were given by BGF leadership to arrest or interrogate any reporters, and that actions were being taken to punish those responsible.

## **ARRESTS BY ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS**

### **Three Civilians Arrested in Paletwa Township**

On March 16, Arakan Army (AA) arrested three civilians in K-Tha Village from Paletwa Township in Chin State. According to the Khumi Affairs Coordination Committee (KACC), they were arrested for opposing giving rice to the AA. Khaing Thuka, AA spokesman, denied the accusations.



## **RELEASES BY ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS**

### **Arakan Army Releases Workers from Construction Site in Chin State**

The Arakan Army (AA) took 15 workers, including seven local laborers and eight Indian nationals, from a Paletwa river port construction site in southern Chin State into their custody on March 22 before releasing them on March 23. The AA alleged that the army had used the site as a point from which to attack them with heavy weapons, rockets and launchers on March 21. The AA said they found shells and ammunition on the site; however, after questioning the 15 workers they determined they were not involved with the attack or the army and released them. Chin State government spokesperson, Soe Htet, said that the AA soldiers took some 5 million kyat (3,550 USD) from the workers. AA denied this allegation.

### **1.5 Million Kyat Fee For The Release of Five villagers Arrested by TNLA**

On March 15, 7.5 million kyat (5,377 USD) were given to the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) to secure the release of five Kolonlishaw ethnics who were detained by TNLA for allegedly growing marijuana. The victims were the residents of Walu Village in Namkam Township in northern Shan State. Four were identified as Oak Shi Lin, Kyin Yo Paung, Kyone Min Phuu, Kyin Hlaing Shwin and the fifth remains unidentified.

### **Village Administrator Released after almost 1 year imprisonment**

On March 7, Tun Nu from Kyauktaw Township in Arakan State was released after the Arakan Army (AA) detained him for nearly one year. Tun Nu is a pastor and village administrator in Taungminkular Village. He was arrested by AA in his home on January 19, 2019.

# **Restrictions on Civil and Political Rights**

### **Two men detained for suspected ties to AA released in Kyauktaw Township**

On March 10, Maung Shwe Aye (54) from Khaung Tote village and Kyaw Nyein (53) from Sapho Thar village were released after being detained by the army on March 8 in Kyauktaw Township in Arakan State. Maung Shwe Aye stated that they were released after being questioned as to whether they were associated with the Arakan Army (AA). He also said that they did not know which unit detained them because the detainee's faces were covered during questioning.

### **Villagers Forced to Help Build Army Camp in Mong Kung Township in Southern Shan State**

Villagers in Mong Kung Township in Southern Shan State were forced to provide wood and bamboo, as well as vehicles and manpower, to government troops who are building a military camp on Loi Don mountain during the week of March 16.

As the army prepares to build their own camp on the site of the former Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) base, which withdrew its troops in late February after clashes with the army, they have ordered villagers in both Ham Ngai and Ho Khe village tracts to send wood and 1,000 stalks of bamboo for its construction. They have also reportedly been forced to carry food rations for the troops. Additionally, locals from Ho Khe have stated that seven vehicles owned by villagers are ready for military use each day, meaning if soldiers need to buy food rations, they procure these vehicles. Locals have also reportedly been forced to work in the army camp daily or longer. Some have been called up to work for 10 days, after which they are allegedly allowed to return to their homes.

### **One Villager Died After Being Arrested and Interrogated By Military**

On March 4, Maung Phyu Tun, a resident of Namaday Village, who was arrested and interrogated by the military, died from suffering severe injuries at Kyauktaw Hospital in Arakan. Maung Phyu was handed over to Kyauktaw Police Station on March 4 and died of wounds suffered in the interrogation later that night, said Maung Phyu Tun's son Kyaw Kyaw. On February 26, Maung Phyu was arrested by the army while returning home from work by boat.

#### **Four Villagers Released by Army**

The army released Maung Oo, Maung Nu Sein, Aye Kyaw Win and Maung Kyan from Marlar Village in Kyauktaw Township from Arakan State after being arrested on March 13 and interrogated for three days in relation to the Arakan Army. Four of them were arrested and interrogated with hands tied behind their backs, their faces covered and without food.

#### **One of 10 Detained by Army Found Dead in Kyauktaw Township**

The body of Maung Win Gyi, 45, was discovered floating in waters near Tinma village in Kyauktaw Township on March 18. He was one of the 10 male detainees held by the army after being taken on March 16. Local villagers said that a battalion entered Tinma village and took 50 male residents including Maung Win Gyi to a nearby hilltop military base at about 6 p.m. on March 16, most returned that same evening but 10 remained in military custody. In addition to the body of Maung Win Gyi, three other corpses were found floating in waters on the afternoon of March 19, though they have not yet been identified.

## Month in Review

### Freedom of Speech and Expression

In March, environmental activist Saw Thar Phoe, National Assembly Representative Kyaw Zan from Buthidaung Township, Arakan State, Tun Kyi and Chan Maung, two members of the Special Economic Zone Watch Group were charged for exercising freedom of expression. In addition, activist Than Hla from Switte Township, Arakan State, Naung Htet Aung, Aung Pyae Sone Phyo, Zaw Htet Naing, Hnin Nu, and Aye Myat Mon Kyaw from Yangon University of Education, Thu Ta Soe from Yankin Education College, and Thet Tin Aung from Taungoo Education College, were sentenced.

In March, five civilians from Aung Thabyay Village, Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Division were sentenced to five years imprisonment after they were arrested and sued over a coal-fired power plant. Furthermore, while the police tried to arrest five of Aung Thabyay villagers who were issued arrest warrants, a bullet hit the leg of Shwe Ohn, a villager and more than ten villagers were arrested including Shwe Ohn.

Therefore, AAPP urges the government to improve the human rights situation by promoting the civil rights of its citizens and to immediately amend or abolish all laws that restrict the freedom of speech and expression, release all political prisoners oppressed for exercising the freedom of speech and expression, and release all of those who are facing trial inside and outside of prison.

### Freedom of Press

Repeated attacks against the freedom of the press continued in March

- Nay Myo a.k.a Nay Myo Lin, editor-in-chief of Mandalay-based Voice of Myanmar was arrested and charged, Khaing Myat Kyaw, editor-in-chief of Narinjara News agency, was also charged
- A group of 10 people, including Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (SB), and local administrators in normal clothes, came to the Narinjara news agency's office and took Thant Myat Khaing, Aung Lin Tun, and Tun Khaing, the three reporters of Narinjara News Agency, for interrogation, they were later released after being questioned for six hours
- Police and CID came to the house of Hlaing Thit Zin Wai a.k.a Thar Lon Zaung Htet, editor-in-chief of Khit Thit News Media and interviewed his family about his work
- Reporter Nanda a.k.a Aung Kyi Myint of Mandalay-based Channel Mandalay TV news agency was prosecuted, and Reuters news agency also was charged (
- DMG (Development Media Group), Mandalay In-Depth News and VOM (Voice Of Myanmar) Mekong News were some of over 200 websites that have been blocked by telecommunications operators with government directives
- Naw Betty Han, a reporter for Frontier Myanmar, and Ko Mar Naw, a photojournalist for Myanmar Times were detained and beaten by some members of Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) and later released after being detained for one day

Repression of the news media obscures human rights hinders free access to information about developments across the country. The rights of journalists are clearly described in chapter (3) of the [News Media Law](#). Charges are stated in chapter (8) of the News Media Law, and punishments are clearly described in chapter (9). The media sector and an accurate flow of information is vital for Burma's transition process. Therefore, AAPP urges the government to protect journalists and the media.

### **Prison Issues**

The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11 declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. This is a matter of great concern to prisoners inside Burma. Most prisons in Burma are overcrowded and have inadequate healthcare & nutrition, and poor hygiene. This makes it very difficult to protect others if someone is infected. On March 17, Ministry of Health and Sport, Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe attended the daily central coordination meeting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and said that [the guidelines would be developed and provided to the Ministry of Health as soon as possible in order to provide health education and healthcare to not only prisoners but also to people living in refugee camps in the conflict areas](#). Furthermore, there has been a reduction in the number of visitors allowed to prisons in order to control the spread of COVID-19. Pesticide spraying has been performed 313 times in prison visiting rooms, according to [the prison department](#). The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) welcomes preventative measures and call on the government to act promptly to limit the spread of disease.

As COVID-19 is a viral disease, it is important to strictly work on prevention. In doing so, the prison health examination must be conducted in advance, and an adequate supply of doctors and medical staff in prisons and hospitals in prisons is urgently needed. As overcrowding and the current poor standard of health care in prison will lead to difficulty in managing COVID-19, AAPP urges the government to implement changes to reduce the number of prisoners in accordance with the law.

### **Land Issues**

In March, a total of nine land activist and farmers, 35 Kareni farmers from Loikaw and Demoso Townships, Kayah State were sentenced and San Win Maung, Aungchanthar Village Headman and farmer activist Cho Cho Win of southern Shan State's Hsihseng Township were charged. When farmers' livelihoods are adversely affected due to land confiscation, having to deal with lawsuits and penalties has caused a great deal of damage to farmers livelihoods. AAPP urges the government to protect the interests of affected farmers as soon as possible.

### **Consequences of Conflict in ethnic areas**

There were severe human rights violations along with heavy armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army in March.

- **Deaths from tortures**

1. [Maung Phyu Htun from Nhamadar Village, Palatwa Township, Chin State](#), was arrested and interrogated by Tatmadaw and died of torture in an interrogation center at Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State on March 4.
2. [Maung Win Gyi's body was found floating in the water on March 18](#), he had been arrested together with nine local residents from Tinma Village, Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State by Tatmadaw.
3. [Than Shwe Maung's dead body was sent to the hospital by Tatmadaw on March 29](#).

- **Arrests**

Villagers who were arrested in Arakan and Shan States by Police, Military Troops and Military Cooperation groups –

### **Kyauktaw Township**

[Ten villagers from Tinma village](#), [Nine villagers from Myauktaung village](#), [Eight villager from New Tinma village](#), [Mae Tote Chay from Marlar village and his son Than Htun Maung and Daw Ma Chay from Tharsi village](#), [U Than Shwe Maung from Datphyu village](#) (he was death during detention), [Two villagers from Gaungtote village](#) (they were released after being arrested for two days), [Four villagers from Marlar village](#) (they were blindfolded, handcuffed their back and kept unfed for three days and nights during interrogation and they were released after being interrogated)

### **Minbya Township**

[Two villagers from Naran village](#)

### **Kyaukphyu Township**

[Around 20 villagers from Ywama Taung near Pyone Pyae village, Kinnchaung village Tract, Ponnagyunn Township](#), [Two villagers from Aitin village](#)

### **Eastern Shan State**

[Maingait village administrator and his son, Maing Hsat Township in Eastern Shan State](#) (Later on, the administrator's son was released)

### **Human Rights Violations Committed by Ethnic Armed Organizations**

- **Arrests**

1. Arakan Army arrested [three villagers from Kaytha village, Palatwa Township, Chin State](#), [five staffs from Moe Htet Myint Tower Company](#) (they were released after being detained for two days) and [fifteen workers from Palatwa Jetty Bridge Construction](#) (they were released after being detained a day).
2. Troops of the Palaung State Liberation Front/ the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (PSLF/TNLA) arrested [five residents from Kyankar village, Namkham Township, Northern Shan State](#).

The following casualties were reported due to the ongoing conflict in the country

#### **Conflict related casualties**

- Seven residents including two children were killed and 53 residents including 14 children were injured by gunfire in Palatwa Township, Chin State, Mrauk-U, Sittwe, Kyauktaw, Ponnagyunn, Maungdaw and Minbya Townships, Rakhine State.
- A resident were killed by gunfire in Dwelunn Township, Karen State.
- Two residents were killed by gunfire in Namhkam Township, Shan State.

#### **Artillery Shell explosion injuries and fatalities**

- Five residents including a child were killed and 58 residents including 21 children got injured in Kyauktaw, Rathedaung, Ann, Minbya and Ponnagyunn Township, Rakhine State.

#### **Landmine and bomb blast injuries and fatalities**

- A child was killed and five children got injured by bomb blast in Mrauk-U, Kyaukphyu Townships in Rakhine State. Moreover, a child was killed and ten residents including a child got injured by landmine in Rathedaung, Minbya and Maungdaw Townships, Rakhine State.
- Two residents in Mogaung Township, Kachin State and another two residents in Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region got injured by landmine.

This is a matter of critical concern to ethnic minorities. ethnic minorities are living with the threat of daily human rights violations, daily living under fear and insecurity. Therefore, there it is important these indigenous communities receive the justice they deserve.

In summary, the prevalence of human rights violations in Burma has deteriorated amid the COVID-19 pandemic period. Therefore, we urge the government to address the rights of equality and freedom of living as promoting human rights.

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#### Army Arrests Village Administrator and Civilian in Arakan State

([3 March 2020 - Narinjara/Burmese](#))  
([15 March 2020 - DMG/Burmese](#))

#### Army Detains Ten Civilians in Arakan State

([17 March 2020 - DMG/Bumese](#))  
([18 March 2020 - Narinjara/Burmese](#))

#### Nine Civilians Arrested in Kyauktaw Township

([20 March 2020 - BNI/Burmese](#))

#### 8 Men from Tin Ma Village in Kyauktaw Township Arrested by Army

([13 March 2020 - Narinjara/Burmese](#))  
([17 March 2020 - BNI](#))

#### Two Young Men Arrested at Checkpoint Sittwe Township

([6 March 2020 - DMG](#))  
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#### Police Arrest Villagers After Clash Over Chinese Cement Plant Protest in 2019

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#### Environmental Activist Sued and Charged for Defamation against the State

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### DETENTIONS

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#### A Civilian Missing During Fighting in Mrauk-U Township

([5 March 2020 - Narinjara/Burmese](#))

#### Three Men Missing from Kyauktaw Villages

([27 March 2020 - Narinjara/Burmese](#))  
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## TRIALS

**Court Granted Bail to Buddhist Monk Sandita**

[\(5 March 2020 - Myanmar-Now/Burmese\)](#)

## RELEASES

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## **ARRESTS BY ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS**

### **Three Civilians Arrested in Paletwa Township**

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## **RELEASES BY ETHNIC ARMED GROUPS**

### **Arakan Army Releases Workers from Construction Site in Chin State**

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### **Four Villagers Released by Army**

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