

# BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA

advocacy, capacity-building & strategic interventions for human rights & democracy

Issue 136

April 2018

- Burma/Myanmar finally relents and allows UNSC to visit; UNSC delegates access Arakan State.
- UNSG Antonio Guterres includes the Tatmadaw in his annual list of parties that committed sexual violence in armed conflict; Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing says “[n]o sexual violence happened in the history of the country’s military”.
- ICC Prosecutor argues for the court to exercise jurisdiction over the mass deportation of the Rohingya from Burma to Bangladesh.
- Government says that Rohingya with National Verification Cards (NVCs) can apply for citizenship within five months and travel freely afterwards; political parties oppose easing travel restrictions.
- Rohingya making perilous sea journeys on the rise once again, as refugee boats land in Indonesia and Malaysia.
- EU and US are considering more targeted economic sanctions against Burma.
- AICHR reps make unprecedented statement on the situation in Arakan State.
- CEO Zuckerberg questioned on Facebook’s role in Burma; activists accuse FB of not doing enough to stop hate speech.
- Police officer confesses that the two detained Reuters reporters were set up. He is sent to jail and his family evicted from their home after his testimony.
- Clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) displace more than 5,000 civilians in Kachin State.
- Tatmadaw shoots dead Saw O Moo, an indigenous Karen community leader and environmental activist.
- Thingyan presidential amnesty includes the two Kachin pastors imprisoned for helping journalists uncover Tatmadaw abuses.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### KEY STORY: INN DIN MASSACRE SOLDIERS IMPRISONED, REUTERS REPORTERS’ CASE REVEAL A ‘SET-UP’ BY PROSECUTION WITNESS

- 3 Rohingya crisis update: The re-emergence of refugees fleeing by boat
- 3 Facebook continues to battle allegations of facilitating hate speech
- 4 Other Rohingya crisis updates
- Burma finally relents and allows UNSC to visit; UNSC delegates access Arakan State
- 6 Other international response updates

### ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND CONFLICT

- 7 “Worst conflict” displaces more than 5,000 civilians in Kachin State
- 8 Civilians trapped, killed and missing in Kachin and Shan states
- 8 Tatmadaw kills indigenous Karen community leader
- 9 NCA updates

### MILITARY

- 9 Tatmadaw rapes 73-year old woman in Shan State

### DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

- 10 Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint stress ‘collective strength’ and reform
- 10 President pardons 36 political prisoners in annual new year’s amnesty

### ECONOMY/NATURAL RESOURCES

- 11 EU and US consider more targeted economic sanctions against Burma
- 12 Workers call on government to strictly implement new wage increase

### WOMEN RIGHTS

- 13 Report highlights harassment, discrimination against female garment factory workers

### 13 REPORTS

Receive the Burma Bulletin monthly!  
Subscribe at <http://www.altsean.org> or  
<http://eepurl.com/bE2nRT>



Follow us [http:// www.twitter.com/Altsean](http://www.twitter.com/Altsean)



Find us on [http:// www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

## KEY STORY: INN DIN MASSACRE SOLDIERS IMPRISONED; PROSECUTION WITNESS REVEALS 'SET-UP' IN REUTERS REPORTERS CASE

---

On 10 April, the official Facebook page of Tatmadaw head Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing announced that seven Burmese soldiers were sentenced to 10 years in prison with hard labor for their role in the massacre of 10 Rohingya men in Inn Din village, Arakan/Rakhine State in September 2017 [see *January Bulletin*].<sup>1</sup> “Four officers were denounced and permanently dismissed from the military and sentenced to 10 years with hard labor at a prison in a remote area. Three soldiers of other rank were demoted to the rank of ‘private’, permanently dismissed from the military and sentenced to 10 years with hard labor at a prison in a remote area,” the statement read, adding that legal proceedings against individuals “involved in the crime” are ongoing.<sup>2</sup>

Confusion arose on 17 April, as the Myanmar National Television website reported that the April 16 presidential pardon included the seven soldiers jailed for their involvement in the massacre. The website reportedly showed the men emerging from a prison in Sittwe, Arakan State, with one of them shaking hands with a uniformed prison official. The network soon removed the report and apologized, saying that “further investigation” revealed its information to be incorrect. Government spokesperson Zaw Htay told media, “It’s not true, it’s false news...they are still in prison.”<sup>3</sup> [see *Democracy and Governance for more information on the pardons*]

### Case against journalist goes on, police witness reveals 'set-up' and is punished

Meanwhile, authorities pushed ahead with the ongoing imprisonment and trial of Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, detained since December under the Official Secrets Act for receiving documents concerning events in Inn Din [see *December Bulletin*]. On 11 April, a Rangoon/Yangon court rejected an appeal to dismiss the case, with Judge Ye Lwin saying there was “a proper reason” for the charges. Defense lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said the judge wanted to hear the testimony of the eight remaining prosecution witnesses.<sup>4</sup>

Reuters president and editor-in-chief Stephen J. Adler expressed deep disappointment over the court’s decision.<sup>5</sup> On 12 April, UN Special Rapporteurs Yanghee Lee and David Kaye said the case raised “grave concern for investigative journalism” in Burma, and emphasized the “absurdity” of the soldiers receiving a 10-year sentence for committing the atrocities while the journalists face a 14-year sentence for reporting it.<sup>6</sup> UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson also reiterated his calls for the pair’s release.<sup>7</sup>

On 20 April, prosecution witness Police Cpt Moe Naing testified that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were victims of a sting operation. Moe Naing told the court that Police Brig Gen Tin Ko Ko ordered a “set-up” to trap the journalists: “Police Brigadier General Tin Ko Ko told the police members, ‘if you don’t get Wa Lone, you will go to jail.’” Moe Naing said the police chief violated police ethics and “... made the union government misunderstood by the international community.” He said he had been detained since the journalists’ arrest and was told he would testify as a prosecution witness. On 30 April, a police spokesperson told reporters that Moe Naing was sentenced to an undisclosed prison term for violating Burma’s Police Disciplinary Act. He was charged under two sections of the Act, with each carrying up to a one year term, but his exact sentence remains unknown.<sup>8</sup> Moe Naing’s wife has had no contact with him since his arrest; less than 24 hours after Moe Naing’s revelation, their family was evicted from police housing in Naypyidaw.<sup>9</sup>

On 26 April, 163 Burmese CSOs sent an open letter to the country’s new president, Win Myint, calling for an independent investigation into the entrapment allegations. They said that the use of entrapment posed a threat to the judicial system and eroded public confidence in the rule of law. “This trial is over. There is no more need for testimonies. The detainees should be released immediately,” Moe Thway, the chairman of CSO Generation Network, said.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Reuters (11 Apr 18) Seven Myanmar soldiers sentenced to 10 years for massacre exposed by Reuters

<sup>2</sup> Reuters (11 Apr 18) Seven Myanmar soldiers sentenced to 10 years for massacre exposed by Reuters

<sup>3</sup> NY Times (18 Apr 18) Did Soldiers Jailed for Killings Go Free? Myanmar TV Says Yes (Briefly)

<sup>4</sup> Reuters (11 Apr 18) Myanmar judge rejects request for dismissal of case against two jailed Reuters reporters

<sup>5</sup> Reuters (11 Apr 18) Myanmar judge rejects request for dismissal of case against two jailed Reuters reporters

<sup>6</sup> Asian Correspondent (13 Apr 18) Burma: UN, Britain call for immediate release of Reuters journalists

<sup>7</sup> Asian Correspondent (13 Apr 18) Burma: UN, Britain call for immediate release of Reuters journalists

<sup>8</sup> Time (30 Apr 18) Myanmar Police Officer Who Said That Detained Reuters Reporters Were Set Up Has Been Jailed

<sup>9</sup> Asian Correspondent (23 Apr 18) Burma: Police officer admits Reuters reporters were ‘set-up’

<sup>10</sup> DVB (26 Apr 18) Reuters reporters trial: CSOs call for investigation into ‘entrapment’ claim

## **Rohingya crisis update: The re-emergence of refugees fleeing by boat**

A concerning trend re-emerged in the month of April, as worsening conditions in Bangladeshi camps prompted an increasing number of Rohingya refugees to attempt to reach Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia in unseaworthy vessels.<sup>11</sup>

On 1 April, it was reported that a boat carrying 56 Rohingya refugees – 19 men, 17 women, and 20 children – landed on Lanta Island, Thailand, after being hit by a heavy storm. This was the first Rohingya vessel spotted on Thai shores for more than a year according to local police sources. Lanta police chief, Police Col M.L. Pattanajak Chakrabandhu said: “We treated them with humanitarian consideration and allowed them to return to sea because they told us they were heading to Malaysia.”<sup>12</sup>

On 2 April, the boat was intercepted at the Malaysian island of Langkawi. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency confirmed that the boat was carrying 56 refugees who were escorted to the mainland for processing by immigration authorities. Malaysia is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, therefore its official policy is to turn away refugee boats unless weather conditions are bad. However, thousands of refugees still enter the country at the discretion of authorities.<sup>13</sup>

On 6 April, fishermen rescued at least five Rohingya refugees off the coast of east Aceh, Indonesia. Unconfirmed media reports said five others died attempting the crossing.<sup>14</sup> On 20 April, another boat carrying 79 dehydrated people landed on the shores of Aceh. It was reported a week before that a boat with 70 Rohingya had left Burma for Malaysia, but it was unclear if this was the same vessel.<sup>15</sup> On 27 April, the International Organization for Migration donated US\$100,000 to assist the 84 Rohingya new arrivals, many of whom had symptoms of stress and anxiety.<sup>16</sup>

## **Facebook continues to battle allegations of facilitating hate speech**

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg continued to refute claims that his platform was being used to propagate Islamophobic hate speech in Burma. In March, the summary of the UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar’s findings stated that Facebook “substantively contributed to the level of acrimony and dissension and conflict” and was not doing enough to curtail anti-Rohingya hate speech” [see *March Bulletin*]. On 2 April, Zuckerberg said his company was actively involved in addressing the problem: “...our systems detect that that’s going on (and) we stop those messages from going through,” he said.<sup>17</sup>

However, users also complained that content intended to raise awareness of Rohingya abuses was mistakenly taken down.<sup>18</sup> A group of six Burmese CSOs and activists also refuted Zuckerberg's claims, saying that the social network was still overly reliant on activists within Burma to report incidences of hate speech. Citing key examples, the activists said that the inadequate system required complaints to be lodged by email, which delayed response and allowed inflammatory hate messages to be circulated.<sup>19</sup>

On 10 April, Zuckerberg reiterated his company would step up efforts to block hate messages in Burma as he faced five hours of questioning by US Congress about electoral interference and hate speech on Facebook. At the joint hearing of the Senate Commerce Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee, Zuckerberg committed that Facebook would tackle hate speech “within 24 hours” of it being posted – a statement heralded as “historic” by Burmese CSOs. Analysts in Rangoon said that it remained unclear how exactly they intended to accomplish this, though Facebook has reportedly hired a number of Burmese speakers to assist in detecting offending content, while they also called for help from CSOs to identify figures that need banning.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Reuters (01 Apr 18) Rohingya refugee boat restocks after storm in southern Thailand

<sup>12</sup> Reuters (01 Apr 18) Rohingya refugee boat restocks after storm in southern Thailand

<sup>13</sup> Reuters (2 Apr 18) Malaysia intercepts boat carrying Rohingya refugees, more perilous sea journeys expected

<sup>14</sup> Reuters (6 Apr 18) Fishermen rescue Rohingya Muslims at sea off Indonesia, with more arrivals expected

<sup>15</sup> IOM (27 Apr 18) IOM Steps in to Aid New Rohingya Boat Arrivals in Indonesia

<sup>16</sup> IOM (27 Apr 18) IOM Steps in to Aid New Rohingya Boat Arrivals in Indonesia

<sup>17</sup> Vox (2 Apr 18) Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook’s role in ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: “It’s a real issue”

<sup>18</sup> Vox (2 Apr 18) Mark Zuckerberg on Facebook’s role in ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: “It’s a real issue”

<sup>19</sup> Washington Post (6 Apr 18) Zuckerberg said Facebook systems helped stop hate speech in Burma. Rights groups disagree; NY Times (05 Apr 18) Groups in Myanmar Fire Back at Zuckerberg

<sup>20</sup> Reuters (11 Apr 18) Myanmar activists welcome Zuckerberg’s 24-hour target to block hate speech on Facebook

## Other Rohingya crisis updates:

**2 Apr:** Burmese Police established three new border force regiments in Maungdaw Township, with a fourth in neighboring Buthidaung Township. Most of the sites were once Rohingya villages, including Myo Thu Gyi, formerly home to some 8,600 Rohingya Muslims who fled due to the conflict.<sup>21</sup>

**4 Apr:** UNHCR and major aid organizations warned of an impending disaster in refugee camps, as monsoon rain looms in Bangladesh. A Save the Children worker in Cox's Bazar warned that Rohingya stranded in makeshift shelters in Bangladesh are facing a "catastrophe within a catastrophe" with "over 100,000" Rohingya **directly threatened by landslides and floods**. Aid workers also warned that a potential health disaster may be on the horizon, as the floods risk latrines overflowing and contaminating water supplies. Bangladesh's refugee relief and rehabilitation commissioner, Mohammad Abul Kalam, said they were trying to stabilize the slopes using sandbags and other techniques, while the International Organization for Migration said it was "impossible to mitigate against all disaster."<sup>22</sup>

**11 Apr: Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye met with 30 Rohingya leaders at the Kutupalong camp** during a tour of camps near Cox's Bazar. It was the first visit by a cabinet member from Burma since the crackdown that began in August 2017.<sup>23</sup> Refugees presented him with 13 demands regarding their repatriation, calling upon Naypyidaw to guarantee a dignified and safe return to their homes based on restoration of rights, citizenship and property, accountability for crimes, as well as international presence to guarantee security [*see box*].<sup>24</sup>

### REPATRIATION DEMANDS OF ROHINGYA (presented to Social Welfare Minister Win Myat)

1. Close IDP camps in Sittwe and other part of Arakan and allow freedom of movement
2. No new IDP camps in northern Arakan
3. International security presence in Arakan to keep us safe
4. Restoration of citizenship under the ethnicity of Rohingya
5. End the National Verification card system because it is not a legal document
6. Involvement of UNHCR in the repatriation process
7. Right of Rohingya to return to our original land, village and family compound
8. Return confiscated land and compensate losses
9. Allow international media, human rights groups, and humanitarian workers free access to Arakan
10. Release all Rohingya who are not guilty of any crime and stop false accusations
11. Allow Rohingya Government staff to continue with their Government service
12. Allow freedom of religion, education, health, movement, and access to business
13. Hold the soldiers, military, and people who committed abuses and crimes against the Rohingya accountable

Source: Shafiu Rahman/Twitter - List of Refugee Demands

**14 Apr:** Myanmar's Information Portal's (MOI) official Facebook page announced that a **Rohingya family of five returned to one of Burma's reception centers** in Arakan State from Bangladesh.<sup>25</sup> The Bangladeshi Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner dismissed the claims as "propaganda." He said the family left the "no man's land" (Bangladesh-Burma border) and were taken to the reception center upon re-entering Burma. In a separate statement, the UNHCR said it had no direct knowledge of this case and was not consulted nor involved in this reported return.<sup>26</sup> Burmese Rohingya Organization United Kingdom (BROUK) President Tun Khin said that the Burma government "staged a fake event about the repatriation ahead of the visit of the UN Security Council members to northern Rakhine state".<sup>27</sup> Only days prior, UNHCR said conditions in Burma were not conducive for a return of refugees.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The Irrawaddy (2 Apr 18) New Border Bases Rising on Top of Razed Rohingya Villages

<sup>22</sup> Isle of Wight County Press (4 Apr 18) Rohingya face 'catastrophe within a catastrophe' as monsoon rains loom; The Guardian (18 Apr 18) Start of rainy season exposes risks for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

<sup>23</sup> AFP News (11 Apr 18) Myanmar minister makes landmark visit to Rohingya camp

<sup>24</sup> Asian Correspondent (12 Apr 18) Rohingya refugees present Burma with repatriation demands

<sup>25</sup> Dhaka Tribune (16 Apr 18) Informant Aftar stayed at Bandarban UP member's house for months before moving to no man's land

<sup>26</sup> Reuters (15 Apr 18) Bangladesh, UNHCR dispute Myanmar's Rohingya repatriation claim

<sup>27</sup> Dhaka Tribune (16 Apr 18) Informant Aftar stayed at Bandarban UP member's house for months before moving to no man's land

<sup>28</sup> UN News (13 Apr 18) Conditions 'not yet conducive' for Rohingya refugee to return home to Myanmar – UN agency

**16 Apr:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued his annual report to the UN Security Council (UNSC) on conflict-related sexual violence, citing **Burma's armed forces as having committed sexual violence in armed conflict** during 2017 [see *Reports*].<sup>29</sup> Burma was on the list of 51 government, rebel, and extremist groups including those from Congo, Syria, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq, as well as the cross-border group of Boko Haram.<sup>30</sup> Human rights activist and lawyer Razia Sultana told the council she collected **evidence of soldiers raping at least 300 Rohingya Muslim women and girls in 17 villages**. Hau Do Suan, Burma's permanent representative to the UN, rejected the accusations that sexual violence was used as a strategy to force the Rohingya to flee, as "baseless". Government spokesperson, Zaw Htay, said Burma did not refute all allegations of sexual violence but cited a lack of proof for the claims: "These charges are not based on concrete evidence."<sup>31</sup>

**19 Apr:** Following Win Myat Aye's two-day visit to Cox's Bazar in which he was presented with a list of demands by Rohingya refugees, he expressed concerns about "very poor conditions" in the camps, saying repatriation should start as soon as possible due to the coming monsoon season. He said **Rohingya returnees would be entitled to apply for National Verification Cards (NVCs)** that would, in turn, allow them to apply for citizenship in Burma within five months after they were "scrutinised according to the law."<sup>32</sup> He added that those who would accept the NVC and fill out an associated immigration form would be free to travel.<sup>33</sup> On 24 April, in response to Win Myat Aye's statement, opposition party the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) called on Win Myat Aye to "specify, in a transparent manner, which restrictions will be loosened...security and rule of law in the nation are at critical risk."<sup>34</sup> USDP spokesperson Nanda Hla Myint said that "[i]f NVC holders can travel freely, it will be very dangerous for our country."<sup>35</sup>

### **Burma finally relents and allows UNSC to visit; UNSC delegates access Arakan State**

On 6 April, Burma finally gave the UN Security Council permission to visit all areas of the country, including Arakan State, following months of resistance and blocking requests.<sup>36</sup> Representatives from the five permanent Security Council members – China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States – and 10 non-permanent member states joined the delegation.<sup>37</sup> It was speculated that the delegation was invited to Burma on the recommendation of China and Russia as part of a ploy to ease international criticism for lack of transparency and media freedom.<sup>38</sup>

On 28 April, the UN Security Council delegation arrived in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh to visit the refugee camps and discuss the crisis with local officials.<sup>39</sup> On 29 April, thousands of Rohingya refugees gathered at Kutupalong camp to welcome the team of delegates. Many were holding placards, some of which read "We want justice". Rohingya representatives gave the visiting diplomats a charter with demands – including an international security presence in Arakan State, repatriation under UN supervision, and the restoration of their Burmese citizenship – in what was reportedly an "eye opening trip" for the diplomats.<sup>40</sup> One refugee, Mohammed Tayab, hoping to meet the delegation told reporters: "They have killed my family members, they tortured us, they will kill us again...I will tell them my stories. They should listen to us."<sup>41</sup>

On 30 April, UN Security Council delegates met State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing. Statements issued by both sides reported that the discussions focused on the events in Arakan State, with the state counsellor underscoring Burma's readiness to receive verified returnees and cooperate with Bangladesh to expedite the repatriation process. She also stressed the importance of

---

<sup>29</sup>Mizzima (17 Apr 18) Rape puts Myanmar Army on UN 'List of Shame'; Radio Free Asia (18 Apr 18) Myanmar Rejects Evidence Presented in UN Report on Mass Sexual Violence Against Rohingya

<sup>30</sup>VOA (13 Apr 18) Myanmar Military on UN Sexual Violence Blacklist

<sup>31</sup>Radio Free Asia (18 Apr 18) Myanmar Rejects Evidence Presented in UN Report on Mass Sexual Violence Against Rohingya

<sup>32</sup>Reuters (20 Apr 18) Myanmar minister says conditions in Rohingya refugee camps 'very poor'

<sup>33</sup>RFA (24 Apr 18) Myanmar Political Parties Oppose Easing Travel Restrictions on Rohingya

<sup>34</sup>DVB (24 Apr 18) USDP condemns plan to allow Rohingyas right to travel

<sup>35</sup>RFA (24 Apr 18) Myanmar Political Parties Oppose Easing Travel Restrictions on Rohingya

<sup>36</sup>The Irrawaddy (06 Apr 18) Myanmar Agrees to UN Security Council Visit; Where, When to be Decided

<sup>37</sup>The Washington Post (28 Apr 18) UN Security Council team visits Bangladesh to meet Rohingya

<sup>38</sup>The Irrawaddy (23 Apr 18) UN Security Council to Make a Two-Day Visit to Myanmar

<sup>39</sup>The Washington Post (28 Apr 18) UN Security Council team visits Bangladesh to meet Rohingya

<sup>40</sup>Al Jazeera (29 Apr 18) Rohingya demand justice as UN delegation visits Bangladesh camps

<sup>41</sup>The National (29 Apr 18) UN team visits Rohingya camp as refugees call for justice

Bangladesh officials using forms agreed upon by both countries to ensure the success of the verification process. However, government officials present at the meetings claimed that talks did not go well.<sup>42</sup>

On 30 April, the delegation also met with Office of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) members at a working dinner in Naypyidaw, with reports emerging of tensions occurring between the two parties. Khin Nyo, a Lower House lawmaker and member of UEHRD, told reporters the delegation accused the government of deliberately putting off the repatriation of refugees, as well as raising questions about the difficulty of the repatriation procedures. “Their faces clearly showed that they didn’t believe anything we said. They just didn’t care to listen to us. It seems that they have been swayed by the accounts of the other side. They only talked about killings, gang rapes, and throwing living children onto fires,” she said. She continued by saying that when Burmese officials asked for evidence for the claims, the delegation members cited refugee testimony in Bangladesh, also voicing doubts when Burmese officials said that indigenous people had faced death and violence due to the ongoing security situation in Arakan State. “When we raised the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), they said that we always discuss ARSA. When we talked about the Hindus killed by ARSA, they said, ‘Please show us.’”<sup>43</sup>

On 1 May, the delegation visited northern Arakan State, first arriving in the state capital Sittwe before heading to Maungdaw Township, the scene of much communal violence, where they reportedly met members of the local community. In a UNSC press conference held in Rangoon at the conclusion of their visit, the visiting delegates fielded questions from the visiting press regarding how their experience had impacted their opinion on accusations of genocide, human rights abuses and the situation on the ground in Arakan State. Responses were short and general, with UNSC President and Permanent Representative of Poland Joanna Wronecka telling reporters: “One of your colleagues mentioned genocide...we as diplomats, focus very much on the rules of international law.” The British delegate reiterated calls for a thorough investigation and raised the prospect of an ICC referral. No mention was made regarding conditions witnessed in Arakan State.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Other international responses:**

**5 Apr:** President Rodrigo Duterte said the Philippines was willing to provide sanctuary for Rohingya fleeing what he called “genocide”. On 13 April, he apologized to Aung San Suu Kyi for his comments, claiming they were a satirical barb aimed at the West for their slowness to take in Rohingya refugees. “I will apologize to you, but if you have noticed **my statement was almost a satire**,” he said.<sup>45</sup>

**8 Apr:** Ursula Mueller, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said **Burma was not ready for the repatriation of Rohingya**. Mueller was the most senior UN official to visit the country this year and was granted rare access to the most affected areas in Arakan State. She met with the ministers of defense and border affairs, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and other officials.<sup>46</sup>

**9 Apr:** International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Fatou Bensouda **filed a request seeking jurisdiction** over the ‘deportation’ of Rohingya from Burma to Bangladesh, with the aim of investigating and prosecuting those responsible. Bensouda argued that the cross-border nature of the crime of deportation – a crime against humanity – meant that a ruling in favor of ICC jurisdiction would be consistent with established legal principles. This is the first request of its kind at the ICC.<sup>47</sup> On 13 April, the Office of the State Counsellor rejected attempts to potentially prosecute Burma at the ICC, arguing that Burma is not party to the Rome Statute and the ICC does not have jurisdiction. It also reiterated that “it has not deported any individuals in the area of concern and in fact has worked hard in collaboration with Bangladesh to repatriate those displaced from their homes”.<sup>48</sup>

**23 Apr:** Indonesian and Malaysian human rights experts from the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) called on ASEAN governments to develop a ‘whole-of-ASEAN approach’ to deal with the human rights and refugee crises emerging from Arakan State with

---

<sup>42</sup> The Irrawaddy (1 May 18) UN Security Council Team Visits Northern Rakhine State

<sup>43</sup> The Irrawaddy (1 May 18) UN Security Council Team Visits Northern Rakhine State

<sup>44</sup> United Nations Information Centre Yangon (1 May 18) Transcript Of The Press Conference At The End Of The Un Security Council's Visit To Myanmar

<sup>45</sup> Reuters (13 Apr 18) Philippines' Duterte apologizes to Suu Kyi for Myanmar 'genocide' remark

<sup>46</sup> Reuters (8 Apr 18) Myanmar not ready for return of Rohingya refugees - UN official

<sup>47</sup> Asian Correspondent (10 Apr 18) Burma: ICC seeks power to investigate, prosecute crimes against humanity

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor (13 Apr 18) Press Release

the utmost urgency. A consultative body comprised of representatives from each state in the region, AICHR is not known to make controversial public statements criticizing other member states. Therefore, **the Indonesian and Malaysian representatives broke ranks by publicly calling for intervention in the crisis in Burma.**<sup>49</sup>

**24 Apr:** High profile English football club Leeds United announced they would be **conducting a controversial post-season tour of Burma**, playing matches on 9 and 11 May against a local side and the national team. Both the football community within England and the international political community condemned the club's decision, viewing it as an investment in a country facing serious allegations of human rights abuses. The club's owner, Italian businessman Andrea Radrizzani, defended the decision, saying the tour "is about people not governments" and that he believed it may even "highlight the ongoing serious issues in certain areas of the country."<sup>50</sup>

**25 Apr:** The US Department of Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration announced it would be providing an **additional US\$50 million in assistance** for vulnerable people fleeing the Arakan crisis. The assistance will reportedly provide protection, emergency shelter, water, sanitation, healthcare, and psychosocial support, as well as to prepare for the impending monsoon and cyclone seasons.<sup>51</sup>

**26 Apr:** The European Council **imposed further restrictive measures on Burma**, strengthening the European Union's arms embargo and targeting the Burma army and border guard police officials, extending the existing embargo on arms and equipment for one year. It also prohibited the export of dual-use goods for use by the military and border guard police and imposed restrictions on the export of equipment for monitoring communications that might be used for repression. The Council also prohibited the provision of military training to and military cooperation with the Tatmadaw.<sup>52</sup>

**25 Apr: Antonio Guterres appointed Switzerland's ambassador to Germany, Christine Schraner Burgener, as his new Special Envoy on Burma.** In December 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting Guterres appoint a special envoy on Burma to put a focus on trying to resolve the crisis. Burgener was previously Switzerland's ambassador to Thailand.<sup>53</sup>

## **ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND CONFLICT**

---

### **"Worst conflict" displaces more than 5,000 civilians in Kachin State**

During her weeklong trip to Burma/Myanmar from 2-8 April, Ursula Mueller, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, visited Kachin internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and called the situation in Kachin State "a forgotten humanitarian crisis".<sup>54</sup> KIA spokesperson Col. Naw Bu described the escalating clashes with the Tatmadaw in April as "the worst conflict" since Kachin soldiers started fighting the government in the early 1960s.<sup>55</sup>

On 7 April, heavy fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and the KIA. Affected areas included Tanai, Hpakant, Myitkyina, Momauk, and Moegaung townships, and Laiza area.<sup>56</sup> On 10 April, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA began in the location of the Tatmadaw's Infantry Unit 390 and Operations Control Headquarters No. 3.<sup>57</sup> From 20 April to 21 April, government troops and KIA's 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion clashed near Kasong village, Namti Township, Kachin State.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Tatmadaw troops bombarded KIA positions in Hpalap Bum, its 11<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion headquarters, Laiza and Maija Yang with heavy artillery.<sup>59</sup> On 23 April, it was reported that clashes between

---

<sup>49</sup> Progressive Voice (23 Apr 18) Joint Media Statement By H.E. Associate Prof. Dinna Wisnu And H.E. Mr. Edmund Bon Tai Soon, Representatives To The Asean Intergovernmental Commission On Human Rights (AICHR)

<sup>50</sup> The Guardian (25 Apr 18) Leeds owner defends Myanmar tour: 'This is about people not governments'

<sup>51</sup> U.S Embassy in Bangladesh (25 Apr 18) U.S. provides additional \$50 million in response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh

<sup>52</sup> European Council (26 Apr 18) Myanmar/Burma: EU extends and strengthens its arms embargo, and adopts a framework for targeted measures against officials responsible for serious human rights violations

<sup>53</sup> United Nations Secretary-General (26 Apr 18) Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener of Switzerland – Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

<sup>54</sup> UNOCHA (31 Mar 18) UN Deputy Humanitarian Chief Mission to Myanmar and Indonesia; UNOCHA (08 Apr 18) UN Deputy Humanitarian Chief: "All people affected by humanitarian crises in Myanmar must get the assistance and protection they need" [EN/MY]

<sup>55</sup> Reuters (27 Apr 18) Myanmar rebels say clashes with government could displace more people

<sup>56</sup> UNOCHA (10-16 Apr 18) Asia and the Pacific: Weekly Regional Humanitarian Snapshot

<sup>57</sup> Mizzima (13 Apr 18) Six Shan Ni farmers missing after clashes in Kachin State

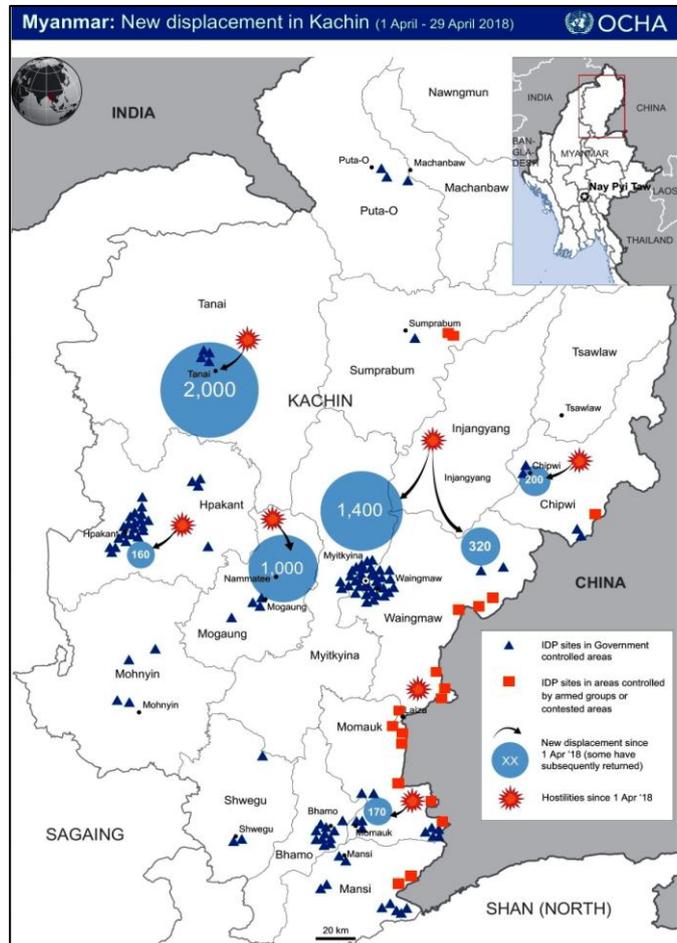
<sup>58</sup> Mizzima (24 Apr 18) Fighting reported between KIA and government troops in Namti

<sup>59</sup> Kachinland News (21 Apr 18) BA Launches Coordinated Assaults across Kachin Region

government troops and the KIA in Mogaung Township sent more than 800 people fleeing to the nearby town of Namti.<sup>60</sup> On 24 April, Burmese troops launched an offensive against the KIA in Injyangyang, forcing about a thousand civilians to leave their homes and walk to nearby Than Phare village, close to the site of the Myitsone dam.<sup>61</sup> On 27 April, KIA spokesperson Col Naw Bu said that fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA could escalate, after the Tatmadaw sent about 2,000 infantry troops, fighter aircraft, and helicopters to combat KIA forces.<sup>62</sup>

### Civilians trapped, killed and missing in Kachin and Shan states

UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that more than 5,000 Kachin civilians have been displaced in Kachin State since early April.<sup>63</sup> This number does not include around 15,000 people who have fled since the beginning of 2018, and around 90,000 residing in IDP camps in both Kachin and Shan states since a ceasefire between the government and the KIA broke down in 2011.<sup>64</sup> Christian and community leaders met government officials and a military commander in an effort to rescue the trapped civilians and provide humanitarian assistance but the Tatmadaw blocked any rescue mission.<sup>65</sup> Around 2,000 people have been trapped in a remote forest near the village of Aung Law without access to aid for more than two weeks.<sup>66</sup> At least three people from Laiza town in Waingmaw Township and from Awng Lawt village in Tanai were reportedly killed during the second week of April by the Tatmadaw's mortar shells and airstrikes.<sup>67</sup> Six residents who are "Shan Ni" or "Red Shan" farmers are missing.<sup>68</sup>



UNOCHA (29 Apr 18) Myanmar: New Displacement in Kachin (1 April – 29 April 2018)

On 23 April, 32 Kachin associations both in Burma and overseas urged the United Nations Security Council to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>69</sup> On 27 April, the US embassy in Rangoon/Yangon said it was "deeply concerned" about intensified fighting in Kachin, Shan, and Karen/Kayin states: "We call upon the government, including the military, to protect civilian populations and allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered to those affected by the conflicts."<sup>70</sup>

### Tatmadaw kills indigenous Karen community leader

In Karen State, attacks continued over the Tatmadaw's road construction, suspected to be part of a ploy to gain control of the area from Karen National Liberation Army's (KNLA) 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade [see *March Bulletin*]. On 5 April, the Tatmadaw shot dead Mutraw indigenous Karen community leader Saw O

<sup>60</sup> DVB (23 Apr 18) Shelling of Village Sends Hundreds More Fleeing in Kachin

<sup>61</sup> DVB (27 Apr 18) More Kachin villagers flee as clashes intensify

<sup>62</sup> Reuters (27 Apr 18) Myanmar rebels say clashes with government could displace more people; DVB (27 Apr 18) More Kachin villagers flee as clashes intensify

<sup>63</sup> UNOCHA (29 Apr 18) Myanmar: New Displacement in Kachin (1 April – 29 April 2018)

<sup>64</sup> AFP (28 Apr 18) Thousands flee fresh clashes in northern Myanmar: UN

<sup>65</sup> UCA News (20 Apr 18) Concern grows for displaced Kachins trapped in jungle

<sup>66</sup> Reuters (30 Apr 18) Thousands call for aid access for villagers trapped by fighting in Myanmar

<sup>67</sup> AP (19 Apr 18) 2,000 Kachin trapped by Myanmar fighting lack food, medicine; The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 18) Kachin Groups Urge UN to Refer Myanmar to ICC

<sup>68</sup> Mizzima (13 Apr 18) Six Shan Ni farmers missing after clashes in Kachin State

<sup>69</sup> The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 18) Kachin Groups Urge UN to Refer Myanmar to ICC

<sup>70</sup> US Embassy Rangoon (27 Apr 18) U.S. Embassy Statement on Recent Fighting in Kachin, Shan and Kayin States

Moo while on his way home. Saw O Moo was an advocate for indigenous Karen rights, including land and forest governance.<sup>71</sup> On 11 April, the Tatmadaw claimed that its troops shot at two men suspected as saboteurs and that they “captured one of the men dead”, referring to Saw O Moo.<sup>72</sup>

On 25 April, the UN Human Rights Office for Southeast Asia expressed alarm as the Thai authorities blocked the launch of Karen Peace Support Network’s report revealing the humanitarian crisis in Karen State [see *Reports*].<sup>73</sup> In its report, Karen Peace Support Network said that as of April 6, 2,417 people from 12 villages near the planned road have been displaced because of the fighting. A further 479 from four villages are ready to leave if fighting continues and Tatmadaw troops move closer to their homes.<sup>74</sup>

### **NCA updates:**

**6 Apr:** The peace process steering team (PPST) – comprised of the leaders of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) – formed **two teams to hold informal talks** with the government on political and security issues.<sup>75</sup>

**9 Apr:** New Mon State Party (NMSP) Vice Chairperson Hon Sar said that **NMSP has not yet joined the Mon State Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) even after signing the NCA**. NMSP said: “We have requested three places – Mon and Kayin [states] and Tanintharyi [Region]. There are many Mon people in the Kayin State and Tanintharyi [Region] and many of our troops are active there. We won’t accept it if they only gave us the Mon State”.<sup>76</sup>

**26-27 Apr:** The Peace Commission and the peace dialogue committee of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) held peace talks in Loikaw, Karenni/Kayah State. KNPP announced that KNPP agreed “to keep on its efforts for signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement...”<sup>77</sup>

## **MILITARY**

---

### **Tatmadaw rapes 73-year old woman in Shan State**

On 2 April, a Tatmadaw soldier raped a 73-year old woman and slashed her head and ears to rob her earrings, near Mong Phyak town, Eastern Shan State.<sup>78</sup> The Tatmadaw arrested Pvt Nay Myo Thu and said that he will be charged in a military court. Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) spokesperson Hor Hseng said that they “want him [Pvt Nay Myo Thu] to stand trial in the civilian court in order to ensure justice for the victim”.<sup>79</sup> On 23 April, SHRF urged the Australian-run company Access Asia Mining to immediately pull out from its planned 150,000 acre gold-mining venture in Mong Phyak.<sup>80</sup> Hor Hseng explained that when giant companies enter the areas to conduct business, the military takes responsibility for their security, with high social and environmental costs to the area.<sup>81</sup>

### **Other updates:**

**24 Apr:** It was reported that the Military Appointments Office, overseen by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, **reshuffled nine regional Tatmadaw military commanders**. Tatmadaw observer Maung Maung Soe commented that regional commanders are often promoted to heads of the Bureau of Special Operations and that “such a reshuffle of commander posts is a very rare move for the Tatmadaw and is done only when completely necessary...” He added that it was difficult to guess the reason behind the reshuffle.<sup>82</sup>

**26 Apr:** The military-run Defense Ministry announced that **47 Tatmadaw officers were sanctioned for recruiting child soldiers**, though details were not given on what the sanctions entail nor how many

---

<sup>71</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Apr 18) Tatmadaw Kills Indigenous Karen Community Leader, Local Groups Say

<sup>72</sup> The Irrawaddy (11 Apr 18) Tatmadaw Claims Killed Karen Community Leader Was a Plainclothes Fighter

<sup>73</sup> The Nation (25 Apr 18) UN concerned as Thailand blocks launch of report on Karen crisis

<sup>74</sup> Frontier Myanmar (27 Apr 18) War returns to Kayin State

<sup>75</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Apr 18) Peace Process Steering Team Form Panels to Hold Informal Talks with Gov’t

<sup>76</sup> Mon News Agency (24 Apr 18) NMSP unable to establish JMC-S

<sup>77</sup> Peace Commission & Karenni National Progressive Party (27 Apr 18) Joint Statement released by Peace Commission and Karenni National Progressive Party Loikaw, Kayah State, 27 April 2018

<sup>78</sup> Shan Human Rights Foundation (23 Apr 18) Brutal rape of 73-year-old woman by Burma Army soldier in Mong Phyak highlights vulnerability of women in militarized eastern Shan State

<sup>79</sup> The Irrawaddy (23 Apr 18) Tatmadaw Troops Protecting Shan State Mine ‘Pose Human Rights Threat’

<sup>80</sup> Shan Human Rights Foundation (23 Apr 18) Brutal rape of 73-year-old woman by Burma Army soldier in Mong Phyak highlights vulnerability of women in militarized eastern Shan State

<sup>81</sup> The Irrawaddy (23 Apr 18) Tatmadaw Troops Protecting Shan State Mine ‘Pose Human Rights Threat’

<sup>82</sup> The Irrawaddy (24 Apr 18) Regional Military Commanders Reshuffled

children were recruited.<sup>83</sup> These sanctions come after the 28 March sentencing of former child soldier Aung Ko Htwe to two years imprisonment and hard labor for detailing his forced enlistment in the Tatmadaw in an interview with Radio Free Asia [see *March Bulletin*].

## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

---

### Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint stress ‘collective strength’ and reform

On 2 April, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi marked the second anniversary of the National League for Democracy’s (NLD) administration with a speech saying that NLD was handing over to a second generation of leaders, including President Win Myint, referring to Win Myint’s appointment as NLD’s deputy chairman-1, together with Dr Zaw Myint Maung as deputy chairman-2. Win Myint’s 24 March appointment to his newly-created party role was important because it was the first time that the NLD indicated a potential successor to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi as its leader.<sup>84</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech also underlined the party’s dedication to achieving peace through ‘collective strength’, stating: “Let us strive collectively for the emergence of a just and free nation...Not only in Rakhine State, which has received the attention of the world, but in the entire country[.]”<sup>85</sup>

Sai Ngern, spokesperson for the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), endorsed the message of the state counsellor, adding that all parties to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) – the NLD, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed groups, political parties, civil society, and the local people – must work collectively to achieve peace.<sup>86</sup> Shan politician Nyunt Lwin remained more critical and stressed the need to clarify how the state counsellor defines ‘collective strength’: “It is important to know with whom she will build strength; whether she wants to work collectively with the ethnic groups to serve the Union, or to build a good relationship with the Tatmadaw to wipe out the EAOs,” he said.<sup>87</sup>

On 17 April, in commemoration of the Buddhist New Year, President Win Myint addressed the nation and outlined an 11-point reform plan centered on social issues. The president cited improving the judiciary, returning confiscated land, addressing government corruption, and protecting human rights.<sup>88</sup> The President stipulated the need to “strive for a judiciary branch that is impartial, independent, and which balances fairness and judicious reasoning”.<sup>89</sup> Prominent rights attorney Robert San Aung said that the “deteriorating judiciary” could be rectified by reshuffling judges throughout the country and bringing in replacements. He also called for strong laws to protect people from being “sued repeatedly”.<sup>90</sup>

### President pardons 36 political prisoners in annual New Year’s amnesty

On 17 April, the office of Win Myint pardoned more than 8,500 prisoners as part of an annual amnesty marking Burma’s New Year. The amnesty was extended mostly to drug offenders, as well as 36 political prisoners, including:<sup>91</sup>

- Ethnic Kachin Baptist pastors Dumdaw Nawng Lat and Baptist youth leader Langjaw Gam Seng, who spent more than 15 months in detention for helping journalists cover the aftermath of a military airstrike on Mongko town, where a Catholic Church was bombed and destroyed in November 2016 [see *December 2016 and October 2017 Bulletins*];
- Nanda Thara, a Buddhist abbot from Mrauk U, and Khine Ni Min, who were detained in April 2017 and charged under the Unlawful Association for organizing a football match and a literary talk on the 8th anniversary of the establishment of the Arakan Army (AA) [see *April 2017 Bulletin*]<sup>92</sup>;
- Former All Burma Students Democratic Front leader and member of the RCSS, Than Chaung (aka Sao Kun Kyaw). He previously received four death sentences and life in prison for the murders of student activists at Laisan camp, Shan State in 1992.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Myanmar Times (27 Apr 18) Tatmadaw sanctions 47 officers for recruiting child soldiers

<sup>84</sup> Frontier Myanmar (04 May 18) Finally, the NLD embraces succession planning

<sup>85</sup> The Irrawaddy (02 Apr 18) State Counselor Emphasizes Need for ‘Collective Strength’ in Speech to Nation

<sup>86</sup> The Irrawaddy (02 Apr 18) State Counselor Emphasizes Need for ‘Collective Strength’ in Speech to Nation

<sup>87</sup> The Irrawaddy (02 Apr 18) State Counselor Emphasizes Need for ‘Collective Strength’ in Speech to Nation

<sup>88</sup> The Irrawaddy (18 Apr 2018) Peace, Charter Reform Take Back Seat as Myanmar President Stresses Social Issues

<sup>89</sup> RFA (17 Apr 18) Political Observers Take Aim at Myanmar President’s Holiday Speech

<sup>90</sup> RFA (17 Apr 18) Political Observers Take Aim at Myanmar President’s Holiday Speech

<sup>91</sup> Bangkok Post (17 Apr 18) Myanmar pardons 8,500 prisoners in holiday amnesty

<sup>92</sup> DVB (18 Apr 18) 36 political prisoners included in Thingyan presidential amnesty

<sup>93</sup> Myanmar times (20 Apr 18) Prisoner’s amnesty rekindles bad memories for some

On the same day, the website of Myanmar National Television (MNTV) reported that seven soldiers involved in the Inn Din massacre were freed in amnesty. MNTV quickly took down the report and issued an apology [see *Key Story*].<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the annual amnesty and called on the government to reform or repeal its vague laws criminalizing free speech, saying the yearly ritual “...is no substitute for reform, nor does it absolve the NLD of its responsibility to end these injustices once and for all.”<sup>95</sup>

### Other updates:

**31 Mar:** Burma’s Anti-Corruption Commission reported that it received **1,781 complaints of bribery and corruption between 1 January and 30 March**. More than 500 of them were filed against the Ministry of Home Affairs.<sup>96</sup> On 20 April, the commission filed a corruption case against the director-general of Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is under the Ministry of Sport and Health. Dr. Than Htut allegedly demanded personal favors from a company that won a tender to build two laboratory buildings at the FDA’s Naypyidaw headquarters, as well as structures at 12 FDA district offices around the country.<sup>97</sup> This is the first case publicly announced by the ACC since the inauguration of Win Myint, who vowed to crack down on bribery and corruption,<sup>98</sup> and who instructed the commission members on 12 April to not to be influenced by powerful figures in undertaking their duties and to report to him cases of powerful people protecting those accused of corruption.<sup>99</sup>

**24 Apr:** The NLD Central Executive Committee imposed **sanctions against three NLD legislators who violated procedures related to financial issues**. NLD spokesperson Myo Nyunt did not name the MPs but said that one is a member of the National Parliament, while the others are legislators in regional parliaments, all within Ayeyarwady and Rangoon.<sup>100</sup>

**25 Apr:** Win Myint ventured on his **first foreign trip since becoming president**, visiting Singapore on 26 April to attend the 32<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN summit. Aung San Suu Kyi was scheduled to attend but did not make an appearance, her first absence since the NLD took office.<sup>101</sup>

**30 Apr:** The **Union Election Commission (UEC) approved the new Four Eights People’s Party (FEPP)**, founded by leader Ko Ko Gyi and other 88 generation activists. Second leader, Ye Naing Aung, said the party is predicted to become the third largest political group in the country.<sup>102</sup> The FEPP has opened offices in Rangoon, Bago, Magwe, Mandalay, Shan, and Mon. After receiving approval, the party held its first meeting in South Okkalapa Township, Rangoon, and it will submit its decisions on the party flag, logo, and other policy matters to the UEC by 2 May.<sup>103</sup>

## ECONOMY/NATURAL RESOURCES

---

### EU and US consider more targeted economic sanctions against Burma

On 26 April, the European Union (EU) announced it is considering less broad, more targeted sanctions towards seven Tatmadaw leaders, including Maj Gen Maung Maung Soe, in May or June.<sup>104</sup> All 28 EU member states must reach a unanimous decision to introduce sanctions.<sup>105</sup> The EU also extended its arms embargo on Burma for another year [see *Key Story*].

Two congressional sources said that the United States (US) is also considering more Global Magnitsky sanctions against Burmese military officials. On 25 April, it was reported that the US government was conducting an intensive examination of alleged atrocities against the Rohingya Muslims, documenting accusations of murder, rape, and beatings in an investigation that could be used to prosecute the

<sup>94</sup> New York Times (18 Apr 18) Did Soldiers Jailed for Killings Go Free? Myanmar TV Says Yes (Briefly)

<sup>95</sup> HRW (18 Apr 18) Pardons No Substitute for Reform in Myanmar

<sup>96</sup> The Irrawaddy (02 Apr 18) Anti-Corruption Commissions Receives 1,700 Complaints in 3 Months

<sup>97</sup> The Irrawaddy (20 Apr 18) Anti-Corruption Commission Files Case Against FDA Chief

<sup>98</sup> The Irrawaddy (20 Apr 18) Anti-Corruption Commission Files Case Against FDA Chief; RFA (18 Apr 18) Political Observers Take Aim at Myanmar President’s Holiday Speech

<sup>99</sup> The Irrawaddy (12 Apr 18) President Orders Anti-Corruption Panel Not to Be Influenced by Powerful Figures

<sup>100</sup> Myanmar Times (25 Apr 18) NLD sanctions 3 MPs for financial violations

<sup>101</sup> Myanmar Times (25 Apr 18) President to represent country at ASEAN summit

<sup>102</sup> Myanmar Times (30 Apr 18) Election commission approves Four Eights People’s Party

<sup>103</sup> Myanmar Times (30 Apr 18) Election commission approves Four Eights People’s Party

<sup>104</sup> Reuters (26 Apr 18) EU readies more sanctions against Myanmar; US News (25 Apr 18) EU Readies More Sanctions Against Myanmar

<sup>105</sup> US News (25 Apr 18) EU Readies More Sanctions Against Myanmar

Tatmadaw for crimes against humanity. The State Department-led team of 20 US investigators interviewed over 1,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in March and April.<sup>106</sup> The work was modeled on a US forensic investigation of mass atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region in 2004, which led to a US declaration of genocide that culminated in economic sanctions against the Sudanese government.<sup>107</sup> In December 2017, US imposed sanctions on military members [see *December 2017 Bulletin*] while in February 2018, Canada did the same [see *February Bulletin*].

On 4 April, it was reported that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expressed concern that wider, pending international sanctions related to human rights violations may discourage future foreign direct investment (FDI).<sup>108</sup> IMF Mission chief to Burma, Shanaka Jay Peiris, said preliminary data on FDI for the 2018 fiscal year revealed many investors are delaying project approvals over sanctions risks.<sup>109</sup>

### **Workers call on government to strictly implement new wage increase**

On 2 January, the National Committee for Designating Minimum Wage approved an increase in the daily basic wage from K3,600 to K4,800 (US\$2.68 to US\$3.57).<sup>110</sup> While the government works to formally approve and institute the increase, workers are demanding the raise be firmly enforced.<sup>111</sup> The Myanmar Labor Union for Industrial and Various Services led a campaign with the following demands: 1) The minimum wage be raised further to K5,600 (US\$4.16) per day; 2) Employers strictly follow Article 14(a) of the Minimum Wage Law; 3) Labor disputes with workers be quickly remedied; 4) Fight corruption; 5) Protect and designate service and skills allowances.<sup>112</sup> In previous wage hikes, employers often stopped allocating allowances to counteract higher wages. Worker Maung Lwin said: "Our allowance stopped when our salary increased... We want the set minimum wage and also to receive our former allowances."<sup>113</sup>

### **Other updates:**

**3 Apr:** It was announced that the Naypyitaw Council approved **two special teams to investigate, and possibly confiscate, 30,000 acres of unused farmland** in Mandalay Division.<sup>114</sup> The land was originally confiscated for agricultural zones and then leased to agri-businesses by previous governments. However, if farmland remains unused four years after a permit was issued, the government can seize the land from the leaseholder. The previous Thein Sein government leased 8,000 acres of land for mango production. Lower House lawmaker Than Soe Aung pointed out that it is possible that part of the land under investigation was illegally confiscated from its original owners, as locals continue to complain about land grabbing.<sup>115</sup> On 9 May, the inspection teams will report their findings to the regional Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Working Committee.

**10 Apr:** Dawei/Tavoy residents affected by the Two-Lane Roadlink, which is a component of the Italian-Thai Development Company's (ITD) Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ), sent a letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation in Naypyidaw. The letter highlighted the **government's non-compliance with environmental laws related to SEZ development**, including failure to conduct consultation meetings with communities and failure to disclose to the communities information relating to every stage of the environmental impact assessment (EIA).<sup>116</sup>

**11 Apr:** State-owned Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise (MPE) released plans to **build the country's first modern oil refinery** in Magwe/Magway Division.<sup>117</sup> The new refinery will purchase two million tons of oil per year from the South-East Asia Crude Oil Pipeline Company, which operates the \$2.5 billion Myanmar-China Gas Pipeline Project that exports oil from Arakan/Rakhine State to China's Yunnan Province.<sup>118</sup> The Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) is in the process of administering

<sup>106</sup> ABC News (25 Apr 18) State Dept probing alleged atrocities against Rohingya as US weighs new sanctions

<sup>107</sup> Reuters (25 Apr 18) Exclusive: U.S. team in refugee camps investigating atrocities against the Rohingya

<sup>108</sup> Reuters (04 Apr 18) As Myanmar economy rebounds, sanctions risk gives some investors pause: IMF

<sup>109</sup> Reuters (04 Apr 18) As Myanmar economy rebounds, sanctions risk gives some investors pause: IMF

<sup>110</sup> Frontier Myanmar (17 Apr 18) Wages first, productivity later?

<sup>111</sup> Myanmar Times (03 Apr 18) Workers ask government to monitor wage hike implementation

<sup>112</sup> Myanmar Times (03 Apr 18) Workers ask government to monitor wage hike implementation

<sup>113</sup> Myanmar Times (03 Apr 18) Workers ask government to monitor wage hike implementation

<sup>114</sup> The Irrawaddy (03 Apr 18) Farmland Rented Out by Previous Governments Under Investigation

<sup>115</sup> The Irrawaddy (03 Apr 18) Farmland Rented Out by Previous Governments Under Investigation

<sup>116</sup> Dawei Watch (10 Apr 18) RE: Demand for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) concern with Two Lane Road (Dawei Special economic Zone to Htee Khee) which is a component of Dawei Special Economic Zone

<sup>117</sup> Myanmar Times 11 Apr 2018 Government reveals plans to build first modern oil refinery in Myanmar

<sup>118</sup> Myanmar Times 11 Apr 2018 Government reveals plans to build first modern oil refinery in Myanmar

environmental and social impact assessments for the project. Upon approval, the MOEE will call for tenders from international companies. Chinese government-owned China National Petroleum Corporation holds a controlling stake in the Myanmar-China Pipeline Project, with the Burma/Myanmar government-owned company also claiming a stake. Due to the lack of capacity to process oil for domestic energy consumption, Burma exports most of its natural gas to Thailand and China, with natural gas exports totaling half of the country's export revenues.<sup>119</sup>

**19 Apr:** It was reported that in early April, Deputy Minister for Commerce Aung Htoo led a **Burma delegation across the Burma-China border to conduct studies on implementing an economic zone** to be developed in China. The two countries are now discussing possible locations for the economic zone in China and afterwards, they will discuss how and when to implement the project. In 2017, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop the economic zone for the purpose of boosting the manufacturing and tourism industries in Burma.<sup>120</sup>

**23 Apr:** About 150 villagers from Aunt Thabyay, Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Division **rallied for an end of a coal-fired cement factory project in their area.**<sup>121</sup> This is the second protest by the villagers, as no action was taken to address their concerns after a 2015 protest. Complaints about the factory include the destruction of trees and roads by factory workers, the proximity of the factory to the villagers' residential area, and drinking wells, the factory's negative impacts on health and the environment, and noise pollution.<sup>122</sup>

## WOMEN RIGHTS

---

### Report highlights harassment, discrimination against female garment factory workers

In a soon-to-be-released gender equality assessment of 16 foreign-owned garment factories in Rangoon/Yangon, the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that women experienced routine harassment in the workplace, including being groped and subjected to sexual comments from contract workers, supervisors or peers.<sup>123</sup> Garment workers felt unsafe travelling long distances between their homes in town and rural factories, often at night without lighting along the roads.<sup>124</sup> Some factories organized transport from the factory to dormitories, but workers missed these trips when they worked overtime and had to make their own way home.<sup>125</sup> Workers reported sexual harassment by motorbike taxi drivers and others experienced physical abuse and robbery.<sup>126</sup> Victims of harassment often did not report their cases to the police because they feared losing their jobs.<sup>127</sup> Female garment workers also reported routine pregnancy testing during recruitment. It was reported that factory owners did not want to pay workers' 98-day maternity leave and are worried their production line will be broken.<sup>128</sup>

## REPORTS

---

**Save the Children:** [Horrors I will never forget: The stories of Rohingya children](#)

**Karen Peace Support Network:** [The Nightmare Returns: Karen hopes for peace and stability dashed by Burma Army's actions](#)

**UN Security Council:** [Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence \(S/2018/250\)](#)

**Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma:** [Report on the Human Rights Situation in Burma \(January-December 2017\) \[EN/MY\]](#)

**The Border Consortium:** [The Border Consortium 2017 Annual Report](#)

---

<sup>119</sup> Myanmar Times 11 Apr 2018 Government reveals plans to build first modern oil refinery in Myanmar

<sup>120</sup> Myanmar Times (19 Apr 18) New Myanmar-China economic zone in the works

<sup>121</sup> Myanmar Times (24 Apr 18) Villagers call for halt of coal-fired cement factory

<sup>122</sup> Myanmar Times (24 Apr 18) Villagers call for halt of coal-fired cement factory

<sup>123</sup> ABC (15 Apr 18) Myanmar's women face routine pregnancy tests and sexual harassment in sweatshops

<sup>124</sup> ABC (15 Apr 18) Myanmar's women face routine pregnancy tests and sexual harassment in sweatshops; DVB (12 Apr 18) Garment industry gears up for rise in minimum wage

<sup>125</sup> DVB (12 Apr 18) Garment industry gears up for rise in minimum wage

<sup>126</sup> DVB (12 Apr 18) Garment industry gears up for rise in minimum wage

<sup>127</sup> ABC (15 Apr 18) Myanmar's women face routine pregnancy tests and sexual harassment in sweatshops; DVB (12 Apr 18) Garment industry gears up for rise in minimum wage

<sup>128</sup> ABC (15 Apr 18) Myanmar's women face routine pregnancy tests and sexual harassment in sweatshops