

# BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA  
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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June 2017

- Tatmadaw detains 3 reporters under the Unlawful Associations Act for allegedly “having connections” with the TNLA.
- The Voice Daily’s chief editor Kyaw Min Swe and columnist Kyaw Zwa Naing arrested for allegedly defaming the Tatmadaw.
- Activist Tun Tun Oo sued for streaming a student play with an anti-war message.
- 61 rights organizations call on the govt to bring the Telecommunications Law in line with international human rights standards.
- Anti-Muslim tensions simmer; authorities charge 3 Muslims for praying in public.
- Victims of military sexual violence still denied justice, say activists.
- Situation in Arakan State further deteriorates; authorities re-assert their rejection of UN fact-finding mission.
- IDPs in Arakan State need shelter and sustainable solutions.
- Tatmadaw launches increased offensive operations against the Northern Alliance members; thousands displaced.
- SNLD requests elimination of the term “non-secession” from political dialogue; KNU-Concerned Group rejects the 37 points.
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- Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) freezes, then reopens Burmese traders’ accounts over alleged links to online gambling.
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- UN denies reports that UN resident coordinator in Burma Renata Lok-Dessallien is leaving her UN post for her failure to prioritize human rights.

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## KEY STORY: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THREATENED IN BURMA

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The month of June saw an apparent spike in threats against the freedom of expression, with the arrests of 5 journalists from 3 media organizations, as well as additional charges laid against media and members of the public.

### Tatmadaw detains 3 journalists and 4 civilians

On 26 Jun, the Tatmadaw detained and charged 3 reporters and 4 civilians under the Unlawful Associations Act for allegedly “having connections” with the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), an ethnic armed organization.<sup>1</sup> Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) reporters Aye Naing and Pyae Phone Naing, and Irrawaddy reporter Thein Zaw (aka Lawi Weng) were covering a drug-burning event organized by the TNLA in northern Shan State to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, when they were taken into military custody in Shan State.<sup>2</sup> The court hearing was set for 11 July.<sup>3</sup>

On 28 Jun, lawyer Robert San Aung said that the journalists “were just doing their jobs in the public interest”.<sup>4</sup> The arrests alarmed the Burmese media community, fearing increased restrictions on freedom of expression.<sup>5</sup> Media organizations sent an open letter to the country’s leaders describing the arrest as “censoring the press” and calling for the immediate release of the 3 detained journalists.<sup>6</sup> The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists described the arrests as “... an affront to democracy in Myanmar.”<sup>7</sup> Activists said that Section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act was one of the many laws used to suppress opposition.<sup>8</sup> President’s Office spokesperson Zaw Htay blamed the journalists for the arrests, saying that they should have informed security forces of their presence in a conflict area.<sup>9</sup>

### Telecommunications Law: More arrests, more outrage

On 2 Jun, police arrested The Voice Daily’s chief editor Kyaw Min Swe and columnist Kyaw Zwa Naing under the controversial Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law for allegedly defaming the Tatmadaw by publishing a satirical article on Burma/Myanmar’s armed conflict and peace process [see *May Bulletin*].<sup>10</sup> Legal consultant Khin Maung Myint said authorities acted unfairly and inconsistently after the Bahan Township Court rejected bail for Kyaw Min Swe and Kyaw Zwa Naing on 8 Jun.<sup>11</sup>

On 16 Jun, Kyaw Min Swe testified he was solely responsible for posting the article on social media. The court dropped the charge against Kyaw Zwa Naing and released him because his article was to be printed and not distributed online. On 16, 23, and 30 Jun, the court denied the bail requests of Kyaw Min Swe, who was not in good health.<sup>12</sup>

On 23 Jun, the police summoned Kyaw Min Swe and Kyaw Zwa Naing once again for further investigation into the case under another lawsuit filed by the Tatmadaw over the same satirical article.<sup>13</sup> The lawyers of Kyaw Min Swe and Kyaw Zwa Naing pointed out that it is prohibited to charge the same people in the same case with a different clause of a law.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> RFA (27 Jun 17) Rights Groups, US Embassy Call For Release of Three Detained Myanmar Journalists

<sup>2</sup> Reuters (28 Jun 17) Myanmar army files charges against journalists for contacting rebel group

<sup>3</sup> DVB (28 Jun 17) Irrawaddy, DVB journalists’ hearing set for 11 July

<sup>4</sup> DVB (28 Jun 17) Irrawaddy, DVB journalists’ hearing set for 11 July

<sup>5</sup> Reuters (27 Jun 17) Detained Myanmar journalists to be charged under colonial era law: officials

<sup>6</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Jun 17) Media Organizations Call for ‘Immediate Release’ of Detained Journalists

<sup>7</sup> RFA (28 Jun 17) Myanmar Journalists Charged Under Unlawful Association Act in Northeastern Shan State

<sup>8</sup> RFA (28 Jun 17) Myanmar Journalists Charged Under Unlawful Association Act in Northeastern Shan State

<sup>9</sup> RFA (28 Jun 17) Myanmar Journalists Charged Under Unlawful Association Act in Northeastern Shan State

<sup>10</sup> The Irrawaddy (02 Jun 17) Burmese Newspaper’s Chief Editor and Satirist Taken Into Police Custody Over 66(d) Charge

<sup>11</sup> The Irrawaddy (08 Jun 17) Why Was Bail Denied to Journalists Charged Under Article 66(d)?; RFA (08 Jun 17) Bail Rejected For Myanmar Editor And Satirist as Journalists Launch Solidarity Protest

<sup>12</sup> RFA (16 Jun 17) Yangon Court Releases Myanmar Satire Columnist Detained Under Controversial Law; The Irrawaddy (16 Jun 17) Satirist Released But Detention of Chief Editor Continues in Article 66(d) Case; RFA (23 Jun 17) Yangon Court Rejects Detained Editor’s Fourth Bail Request; RFA (30 Jun 17) Myanmar Court Nixes Fifth Bail Request by Detained Editor

<sup>13</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Jun 17) Military Files Second Lawsuit Against Myanmar Publication: Lawyers

<sup>14</sup> Myanmar Times (27 Jun 17) The Voice satirist to face second charge: lawyer

These detentions sparked increased criticisms within the country. On 6 Jun, over 100 journalists protested in Rangoon/Yangon against Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law.<sup>15</sup> Burmese journalists formed a 21-member Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) at national level to demand the government to abolish the law and drop related lawsuits.<sup>16</sup> The CPJ launched a 10-day white armband campaign named “Freedom of Press” on 8 June and a signature campaign on 23 June to repeal the law.<sup>17</sup> The CPJ filed a complaint when plain-clothed soldier Soe Myint Aung photographed the faces of individual journalists outside Kyaw Min Swe’s hearing on 30 Jun. Some reporters said that they had been tracked since the beginning of the trial. Ma Thuzar of 7 Day TV said that this surveillance “is threatening the work and private lives of reporters”.<sup>18</sup>

Information Minister Pe Myint and other government officials said that legal experts and parliamentarians would amend the controversial law.<sup>19</sup> On 9 Jun, media reported that the National League for Democracy (NLD) blocked party lawmaker Ye Htut from putting forward a question about Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law to the Upper House of the Parliament, saying that the government already had plans to amend the law.<sup>20</sup> Poet and activist Maung Saung Kha, previously jailed under the Telecommunications Law, said that NLD should have allowed the question because people have the right to know what the Parliament is doing.<sup>21</sup>

On 29 Jun, 61 national and international human rights organizations called on the Burmese government to bring the Telecommunications Law fully in line with international standards of human rights.<sup>22</sup> The statement said that “[f]ailure to do so would raise serious questions about the government’s commitment to freedom of expression”.<sup>23</sup>

### **Related developments:**

**4 Jun:** Patheingyi police, Irrawaddy Division, arrested human rights activist Tun Tun Oo on defamation charges after the Tatmadaw sued him for streaming a student play with an anti-war message. Tun Tun Oo said that he just wanted to show to his friends his son’s performance in the play.<sup>24</sup> In January, the Tatmadaw also sued 9 students performing the play [see *January Bulletin*]. As of 14 Jun, 2 of the 9 students sued – Aung Khant Zaw and Myat Thu Htet – were facing trial at the Patheingyi Township Court. The 7 other students, previously acquitted by the township court, were brought to trial at the Patheingyi District Court after the Tatmadaw appealed against the acquittal.<sup>25</sup>

**7 Jun:** The Burmese government banned the screening of the film “Sittwe” at the Human Rights Human Dignity International Film Festival of Rangoon. The censored movie was an 18-minute documentary about young people affected by the conflict in Arakan State. “Sittwe” director Jeanne Hallacy said that “[b]anning films on human rights subjects prevents dialogue which perpetuates conflict, while sharing human rights stories contributes to considering solutions”.<sup>26</sup>

**15 Jun:** Media reported that Magway authorities sued MGY Journal editor Tin Shwe under defamation charges for criticizing a road construction project on social media.<sup>27</sup> Tin Shwe reported that the Magway government banned the production of bricks, but local brickworks continued to operate illegally and destroy the riverside environment. However, he wrongly located the project in Myin Kin village instead

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<sup>15</sup> The Irrawaddy (06 Jun 17) Journalists Launch Campaign, Call for Termination of Article 66(d)

<sup>16</sup> RFA (08 Jun 17) Bail Rejected For Myanmar Editor And Satirist as Journalists Launch Solidarity Protest

<sup>17</sup> The Irrawaddy (08 Jun 17) Mandalay Journalists Join Armband Campaign to Oppose Use of 66(d) Against the Media; The Irrawaddy (22 Jun 17) Yangon Govt Bans 66(d) Opposition Signature Campaign Near Military Command

<sup>18</sup> The Irrawaddy (30 Jun 17) Soldier Photographs Reporters at Article 66(d) Hearing

<sup>19</sup> Eleven Myanmar (11 Jun 17) Govt promises to axe Section 66(d); The Irrawaddy (27 Jun 17) Media Urges Govt to Scrap Article 66(d)

<sup>20</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Jun 17) NLD Refuses Lawmaker’s Article 66(d) Parliament Question

<sup>21</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Jun 17) NLD Refuses Lawmaker’s Article 66(d) Parliament Question

<sup>22</sup> RFA (29 Jun 17) Rights Groups Urge Myanmar to Drop Controversial Statute Used to Prosecute Journalists

<sup>23</sup> Joint statement by 61 Myanmar and international human rights organizations (29 Jun 17) Myanmar: Repeal Section 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Law

<sup>24</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Human Rights Activist Charged Under Article 66(d) for Live-streaming a Satirical Play

<sup>25</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Human Rights Activist Charged Under Article 66(d) for Live-streaming a Satirical Play; The Irrawaddy (15 Jun 17) Patheingyi Students Accused of Defamation Face Trial at District Court

<sup>26</sup> The Irrawaddy (07 Jun 17) Rights-Themed Film Festival Gets Bumper Line-Up, With One Movie Banned

<sup>27</sup> RFA (15 Jun 17) Myanmar Charges Three Reporters Under Telecommunications Law

of Thin Baw Seit village and was sued for damaging the dignity of village authorities.<sup>28</sup> Democracy Today journal reporter Zar Zar San and Myanmar Times reporter Phyuwint Nayche were also charged under section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law over the same Facebook post.<sup>29</sup>

## HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Anti-Muslim tensions simmer

On 2 Jun, Burmese/Myanmar authorities charged 3 Muslims for praying in front of a shuttered Islamic school [see *April Bulletin*] in Rangoon/Yangon.<sup>30</sup> Rangoon officials threatened to take action against people praying in public without official permission as they allegedly blocked the road and threatened “stability and the rule of law” but local Muslims said they did not have enough places to pray.<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch said that “[r]eligious believers should not be threatened or criminally charged simply for exercising their fundamental right to observe and practice their religion”.<sup>32</sup>

On 5 Jun, Arakan/Rakhine State lawmakers urged the government to build more non-Muslim ethnic villages in Muslim-majority townships in northern Arakan State. Deputy Minister of Border Affairs Gen Than Htut said that 36 villages were already built in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships for local Rakhine and other non-Muslim households; the government provided them with a home, farmland, garden space, a trishaw, sewing machine, rice and other food supplies, and a cultivator.<sup>33</sup>

In Jun, supporters held “We Love Wirathu” campaigns to defend the extremist monk Wirathu after Anti-False Buddhist Doctrine Group collected signatures across Rangoon for a petition asking the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (Ma Ha Na) to publicly clarify whether or not Wirathu's actions and speeches conformed with Buddha's teachings.<sup>34</sup> On 12 Jun, media reported that Wirathu accused Facebook of “falling under control of Muslims” after his accounts were blocked.<sup>35</sup>

### Other developments:

**1-5 Jun:** The Mansi Township police opened an investigation into the deaths of the 3 Kachin internally displaced persons (IDPs) murdered and tortured in Tatmadaw custody in May [see *May Bulletin*].<sup>36</sup> The Tatmadaw said it would hand over the soldiers concerned after its own probe.<sup>37</sup>

**13 Jun:** Myitkyina Township court charged 3 Kachin men – Hkawn Zau Jat, Labang Gam Awng, and Khun Seng – under Article 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Law for leading a commemoration of the 6-year anniversary of renewed Kachin conflict. About 7,000 IDPs and residents from Myitkyina and Maingmaw townships walked to the Manau Park in Myitkyina to attend a prayer ceremony and allegedly looked like they were marching without permission. Police also accused them of using slogans not pre-approved by authorities.<sup>38</sup> On 20 Jun, 2 more Kachin men from Hpakant Township, Kachin State, were charged in relation to the commemoration of the Kachin conflict.<sup>39</sup>

**13 Jun:** Bogale Township police arrested police sub-lieutenant Nyi Nyi Aung after his second “wife” filed a complaint under the monogamy law. He could face up to 7 years’ imprisonment.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> DVB (16 Jun 17) Magwe journalists sued under defamation law

<sup>29</sup> RFA (15 Jun 17) Myanmar Charges Three Reporters Under Telecommunications Law

<sup>30</sup> RFA (02 Jun 17) Three Muslims Charged For Praying in Public in Myanmar's Yangon

<sup>31</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Human Rights Watch Defends Muslims Praying in Public

<sup>32</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Human Rights Watch Defends Muslims Praying in Public; Reuters (19 Jun 17) In Myanmar, religious tensions simmer as Rangoon madrassas shuttered

<sup>33</sup> RFA (05 Jun 17) Myanmar's Rakhine Lawmakers Want More 'Ethnic Villages' in Muslim-Majority Areas

<sup>34</sup> The Irrawaddy (21 Jun 17) 'We Love Wirathu' Campaigns Launched

<sup>35</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) U Wirathu Claims Facebook Blocked His Accounts

<sup>36</sup> RFA (01 Jun 17) Myanmar Military, Police Begin Probe of Deaths of Three Kachin Men; The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Police Open Case Against Army Battalion in Kachin IDP Deaths

<sup>37</sup> The Irrawaddy (05 Jun 17) Police Open Case Against Army Battalion in Kachin IDP Deaths

<sup>38</sup> The Irrawaddy (13 Jun 17) Kachin Men Charged Under Peaceful Assembly Law

<sup>39</sup> The Irrawaddy (20 Jun 17) More Kachin Men Charged for Holding Prayers

<sup>40</sup> The Irrawaddy (16 Jun 17) Policeman in Bogale Township Charged Under Monogamy Law

**14 Jun:** Media reported that the Burmese government blacklisted Harn Yawngwe, son of Burma's first President Sao Shwe Thaik and Executive Director of the Euro-Burma Office (EBO), which funds ethnic and civil society organizations. The Burmese Embassy in Ottawa, Canada, was allegedly instructed to not issue a visa.<sup>41</sup> On 21 Jun, the government denied blacklisting Harn Yawngwe and said that his multiple-entry business visa was merely changed to a single-entry social visa.<sup>42</sup>

**22 Jun:** Media reported that Arakan State lawmaker Kyaw Kyaw urged the government to release all political prisoners; he said that "[p]olitical prisoners are not the enemies of the government except when the government is authoritarian."<sup>43</sup> The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) called on the National League for Democracy (NLD) to define the term "political prisoner" and ensure that they are all released.<sup>44</sup>

**23 Jun:** The Tatmadaw released 67 children and young people from its rank in the first discharge to take place in 2017.<sup>45</sup>

**24 Jun:** US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, disregarding his own staff assessments, removed Burma from a US list of the world's worst offenders on the use of child soldiers. Human Rights Watch said it was a "completely premature and disastrous action that will effectively betray more children to continued servitude and rights abuses."<sup>46</sup>

**29 Jun:** The police charged 4 local farmers under Article 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Law for protesting against the Letpadaung copper mine, together with dozens of local farmers. The farmers said that the company's mining was causing air pollution and environmental degradation.<sup>47</sup>

## WOMEN RIGHTS

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### Victims of military sexual violence still denied justice, intimidated

On 19 Jun – International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict – women's rights groups stressed the need for justice for victims of violence.<sup>48</sup> Kachin Peace Network liaison officer Khon Ja declared that there was no justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict areas of Kachin and Shan states.<sup>49</sup> Director of Htoi Gender and Development Foundation Nang Pu said that rape was used as a weapon in conflict, the Tatmadaw enjoyed impunity, and survivors were threatened not to report cases. Shan State Women Affairs Committee member and SNLD lawmaker Nang Khin Htar Yee said soldiers were responsible for most rapes in Shan State, but were not held accountable.<sup>50</sup>

Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party's Women Affairs Committee chairperson Nay Say Hwa called for a separate law specifically to prevent sexual violence in conflict zones and an increased participation of women at the country's major decision-making level to encourage more prevention and protection plans.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The Irrawaddy (14 Jun 17) Myanmar Blacklists EBO Executive Director Harn Yawngwe; Mizzima (24 Jun 17) Harn Yawngwe's problem in getting a visa for Myanmar may be solved

<sup>42</sup> The Irrawaddy (22 Jun 17) Harn Yawngwe Not Blacklisted by Myanmar Govt: Spokesperson; Mizzima (24 Jun 17) Harn Yawngwe's problem in getting a visa for Myanmar may be solved

<sup>43</sup> The Irrawaddy (22 Jun 17) Lawmaker Urges Government to Release All Political Prisoners

<sup>44</sup> DVB (22 Jun 17) NLD has responsibility to define 'political prisoners': AAPP

<sup>45</sup> UNICEF (23 Jun 17) 849 children and young people released from Tatmadaw since 2012

<sup>46</sup> Reuters (24 Jun 17) Exclusive: Overruling diplomats, U.S. to drop Iraq, Myanmar from child soldiers' list

<sup>47</sup> The Irrawaddy (29 Jun 17) Four Letpadaung Protesters Charged Under Peaceful Assembly Law

<sup>48</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) End Impunity for Rapists in Conflict, say Women's Rights Advocates; DVB (20 Jun 17) Kachin NGOs demand justice for victims of sex crimes

<sup>49</sup> DVB (20 Jun 17) Kachin NGOs demand justice for victims of sex crimes

<sup>50</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) End Impunity for Rapists in Conflict, say Women's Rights Advocates

<sup>51</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) End Impunity for Rapists in Conflict, say Women's Rights Advocates

## MILITARY

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### Tatmadaw aircraft crashes, 122 people killed

On 7 Jun, a Y-8F 200 Tatmadaw aircraft crashed into the Andaman Sea during a routine flight from the southern city of Myeik to Rangoon/Yangon, killing 122 people on board. Most of the passengers were the wives and children of servicemen.<sup>52</sup> On 18 Jun, navy vessels and fishing trawlers recovered 92 bodies and plane debris off the coast of the town of Dawei.<sup>53</sup>

Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing said that the 3 possible causes for the crash were mechanical failure, an explosive material on board or pilot error.<sup>54</sup> A Burmese/Myanmar ship retrieved the black box of the plane, which consisted of a digital flight data recorder and a cockpit voice recorder, raising hopes of discovering the still unknown cause of the plane crash.<sup>55</sup>

## ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND CONFLICT

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### Fighting increases in Kachin and Shan states; thousands newly displaced

On 23 Jun, the Northern Alliance – composed of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) – accused the Tatmadaw of launching increased offensive operations against its members.<sup>56</sup>

On 3 Jun, renewed hostilities broke out between the Tatmadaw and the KIA in KIA-controlled gold and amber mining areas of Tanai Township, Kachin State. First clashes were reported near Nam Byu and N'Ga Ga villages. Local residents said that artillery shells hit a house in Kawng Ra village, injuring a woman and her 2 daughters.<sup>57</sup>

On 5 Jun, the Tatmadaw dropped warning letters in the mining areas, ordering all people to leave their homes by 15 Jun - or be arrested and charged for having connections with the KIA.<sup>58</sup> It stated that the purpose of this “clearance operation” was to eliminate the mining’s negative environmental impact.<sup>59</sup> Rights groups questioned if the Tatmadaw’s concern for the environment was genuine, considering that the government-approved jade mining in Hpakant damaged Burma’s “jade land”.<sup>60</sup> KIA officials said that the Tatmadaw’s attack was an attempt to cut KIA’s sources of income.<sup>61</sup>

As a consequence, thousands of people fled, but locals said that some villagers remained behind in nearby villages.<sup>62</sup> On 7 Jun, authorities prevented 500 to 700 villagers from traveling by boat to the safety of Tanai Town.<sup>63</sup>

On 16 Jun, as the deadline passed for civilians to leave the mining areas in Tanai Township, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA flared anew. Clashes were reported at Ja Htu Zup and Kaung Ra villages.<sup>64</sup> On 22 Jun, in a further escalation of the conflict, the Tatmadaw ordered people in Tingkaw

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<sup>52</sup> Myanmar Times (08 Jun 17) Debris from military plane found in sea

<sup>53</sup> Myanmar Times (19 Jun 17) Black box found

<sup>54</sup> Myanmar Times (12 Jun 17) Causes of plane crash narrowed

<sup>55</sup> Myanmar Times (19 Jun 17) Black box found

<sup>56</sup> DVB (26 Jun 17) Palaung villagers flee as Burmese army detains 300

<sup>57</sup> RFA (07 Jun 17) New Clashes in Myanmar’s Kachin State Force Hundreds to Flee Mining Areas; The Irrawaddy (07 Jun 17) Authorities Block Civilians Fleeing Clashes in Kachin State

<sup>58</sup> RFA (07 Jun 17) New Clashes in Myanmar’s Kachin State Force Hundreds to Flee Mining Areas

<sup>59</sup> DVB (21 Jun 17) Upheaval in Tanai as treasures below and message from above converge

<sup>60</sup> DVB (21 Jun 17) Upheaval in Tanai as treasures below and message from above converge

<sup>61</sup> The Irrawaddy (07 Jun 17) Authorities Block Civilians Fleeing Clashes in Kachin State; DVB (21 Jun 17) Upheaval in Tanai as treasures below and message from above converge

<sup>62</sup> RFA (16 Jun 17) Clashes Flare Between Myanmar Army And Ethnic Rebels in Kachin Mining Region

<sup>63</sup> RFA (07 Jun 17) New Clashes in Myanmar’s Kachin State Force Hundreds to Flee Mining Areas; DVB (21 Jun 17) Upheaval in Tanai as treasures below and message from above converge; The Irrawaddy (07 Jun 17) Authorities Block Civilians Fleeing Clashes in Kachin State

<sup>64</sup> DVB (16 Jun 17) Clashes in Tanai as deadline to clear mines passes

village, Tanai Township, and Nawng Mi, Warazup, and Shaduzup villages, Hpakant Township, to not leave their villages until 2 Jul as the Tatmadaw prepared for battles in the area.<sup>65</sup>

On 22-27 Jun, the Tatmadaw launched an offensive against a TNLA base near Man Lan village, Namhsan Township, northern Shan State.<sup>66</sup> Hundreds of people left their homes to escape the shells rained down during the Tatmadaw's assault. At least 2 civilians were killed and hostilities were reported to be ongoing in areas of Kutkai and Namhsan townships.<sup>67</sup> On 26 Jun, artillery shells fell on Pain Hwal village, Kutkai Township, killing 2 residents and injuring 1 other. Shells also landed in nearby Namkhon and Pan Say villages.<sup>68</sup>

Man Lan residents said that Tatmadaw troops from IB 501 and 503 entered their village without provocation and detained residents, beating and accusing them of having links with the TNLA.<sup>69</sup>

### **Situation in Arakan State further deteriorates**

On 20-21 Jun, the Burmese security forces raided a suspected insurgents' camp and killed 3 men during a 2-day clearance operation on the Mayu mountain range in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, Arakan/Rakhine State.<sup>70</sup> The government claimed that an anonymous source told them that armed training sessions have been carried out in the mountains of the region over a long period, and that militants were "regrouping" in the area.<sup>71</sup>

Attacks against civilians continued in Arakan State. On 24-25 Jun, 4 more people were killed in 3 other violent incidents.<sup>72</sup> As authorities identified the perpetrators as Muslims, the incidents increased the mistrust between Buddhist and Muslim communities living in the area.<sup>73</sup> Fearing further attacks, about 200 Rakhine Buddhist from villages in Maungdaw Township left their houses.<sup>74</sup> The State Counselor Office Information Committee said that 38 residents were murdered and 22 people went missing or were abducted between 9 Oct 16 to 26 Jun 17 in Maungdaw Township.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, on 29 Jun, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered its embassies not to issue visas to UN fact-finding mission members, re-asserting its refusal to cooperate with the UN's efforts to investigate reported atrocities by the Tatmadaw in Arakan State.<sup>76</sup>

### **Peace process updates:**

**1 Jun:** The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) requested the National League for Democracy (NLD) government to eliminate the term "non-secession" from the political dialogue. It reminded the government that the Shan State freely decided to join the Union and wanted this freedom and dignity maintained.<sup>77</sup>

**8 Jun:** The KNU-Concerned Group – chaired by Padoh Naw Zipporah Sein, former vice president of the Karen National Union (KNU) – rejected the 37 points agreed upon at the second round of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference [see *May Bulletin*]. It said that those principles were not all-inclusive of ethnic groups.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The Irrawaddy (22 Jun 17) Myanmar Army Warns Four Kachin Villages of Operations

<sup>66</sup> DVB (28 Jun 17) Burmese troops overrun TNLA base in Namhsan

<sup>67</sup> DVB (28 Jun 17) Burmese troops overrun TNLA base in Namhsan

<sup>68</sup> DVB (28 Jun 17) Burmese troops overrun TNLA base in Namhsan

<sup>69</sup> DVB (26 Jun 17) Palaung villagers flee as Burmese army detains 300

<sup>70</sup> The Irrawaddy (21 Jun 17) Three Dead as Police Raid Suspected Militant Camp in Maungdaw; RFA (22 Jun 17) Myanmar Security Forces Kill Three Suspected Insurgents in Rakhine's Maungdaw Township

<sup>71</sup> The Irrawaddy (27 Jun 17) In Troubled Rakhine State, Focus Turns to Mountains

<sup>72</sup> DVB (26 Jun 17) Assaults kill four civilians in northern Arakan violence over weekend: govt

<sup>73</sup> The Irrawaddy (26 Jun 17) Villagers Flee Following Maungdaw Murders

<sup>74</sup> Reuters (27 Jun 17) Troops in Myanmar's Rakhine on high alert after killings of Rohingya

<sup>75</sup> DVB (03 Jul 17) UNHCR delegation led by refugee agency's chief visits Arakan State

<sup>76</sup> Myanmar Times (30 Jun 17) No entry to UNHRC fact-finding mission in Rakhine; RFA (29 Jun 17) Myanmar Says it Will Not Grant Visas For UN Fact-finding Mission on Rakhine

<sup>77</sup> The Irrawaddy (01 Jun 17) SNLD Leaders: Govt Insistence on 'Non-Secession' Deprives Shan of Dignity

<sup>78</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Jun 17) Former KNU Vice Chairperson Rejects 37-Point Agreement

**19 Jun:** TNLA vice chairperson Tar Jode Jar said that the newly formed Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC) [see *May Bulletin*] would meet with the government only as a bloc, however Peace Commission member Aung Soe said it was unlikely.<sup>79</sup>

**20-29 Jun:** The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) held a conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand to discuss the future of the coalition. Senior KIA official and outgoing UNFC chairperson Lt Gen N’Ban La said the recent KIO/KIA switch from the UNFC to the Panghsang group was a necessary move to be "more united" with northern allies because of "...the government’s and the Tatmadaw’s pressure, and discriminatory administration practices" [see *February Bulletin*].<sup>80</sup> The UNFC elected Nai Hong Sar – New Mon State Party (NMSP) member and previous UNFC vice chairperson – as new chairperson.<sup>81</sup>

### **Other developments:**

**9 Jun:** Jakarta-based Institution for Policy Analysis of Conflict (ICAP) warned that “[t]he persecution of Muslims in Burma adds to the potential for radicalization in diaspora communities and to the perception in extremist circles in Southeast Asia that Rohingya are ripe for recruitment.”<sup>82</sup>

**9 Jun:** National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K) leader Shangwang Shangyang Khaplang died aged 77. The NSCN-K did not announce a successor.<sup>83</sup>

**13 Jun:** A Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) tribunal sentenced poppy growers Nsan Naw Mai and Diapha Gam from Tayawn village, Tanai Township, to death and 7 years’ imprisonment respectively for killing anti-drug activist Lahtaw Tu Sai on 15 Jan 2016.<sup>84</sup>

**16 Jun:** The Chin National Democratic Party (CNDP) and Chin Progressive Party (CPP) agreed to merge into one political party.<sup>85</sup>

**21 Jun:** The Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN) called for the withdrawal of Tatmadaw troops, the cessation of mega-development projects, and the provision of humanitarian assistance for refugees in order to guarantee peace in Karenni/Kayah State.<sup>86</sup>

## **DISPLACEMENT**

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### **IDPs in Arakan State still facing discrimination, ad hoc measures**

Burmese/Myanmar authorities started closing camps for long-term internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Arakan/Rakhine State, as recommended by the interim report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State [see *March Bulletin*]. However, IDPs criticized the way the government began the task. Authorities prevented Muslim Kaman IDPs in Ramree camp from returning to their land due to alleged security concerns and offered them money to relocate in other places. Arakanese Buddhists were instead resettled to newly-built homes in the neighboring Kyaukphyu area.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, UNHCR associate communications Officer Andrew Dusek said that IDPs forced to leave their homes in the context of the clearance operations carried out in Maungdaw Township [see *October Bulletin*] urgently needed shelter solutions. OCHA noted that the IDPs expressed concerns over the government’s plan to build 13 “model villages” for 1,152 households. They worried about limited space and future livelihoods in these new villages.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>79</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) Wa-Led Alliance: We Will Only Meet Govt Peace Team as a Bloc

<sup>80</sup> DVB (21 Jun 17) KIA official in explaining UNFC exit: ‘Things that can’t be said here’

<sup>81</sup> DVB (29 Jun 17) UNFC elects new leaders

<sup>82</sup> The Irrawaddy (09 Jun 17) Report: Pro-ISIS Groups Lure Burma Refugees

<sup>83</sup> The Irrawaddy (11 Jun 17) Naga Leader SS Khaplang Dies Aged 77

<sup>84</sup> The Irrawaddy (15 Jun 17) KIO Sentences Poppy Grower to Death for Killing Anti-drug Activist

<sup>85</sup> DVB (16 Jun 17) Two Chin political parties agree to merger; The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) Chin Political Parties Merge

<sup>86</sup> DVB (21 Jun 17) Karenni NGO calls for withdrawal of govt forces, highlights refugee concerns

<sup>87</sup> Reuters (08 Jun 17) ‘What will we eat?’ Muslims from Arakan State struggle after camp closures

<sup>88</sup> DVB (08 Jun 17) Thousands urgently require shelter in north Arakan, says UN



## Other developments:

**1 Jun:** Karen National Union (KNU)'s Mutraw District officials supported IDPs' demands for the Tatmadaw to withdraw its troops from villages in Mutraw District, Karen State, and let them return to their homes.<sup>89</sup>

**2 Jun:** Media reported that a refugee was found dead in Kutupalong camp, Bangladesh.<sup>90</sup>

**3 Jun:** Malaysian police caught 6 human traffickers selling Rohingya children in Malaysia, rescuing 11 victims and finding evidence of the sale of other 6, each for about US\$ 300.<sup>91</sup>

**5 Jun:** To mark State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to Canada, Karen refugees in Canada published an open letter to raise concerns over militarization and human rights abuses in ethnic areas of Burma/Myanmar even while the government pushes ahead with the peace process.<sup>92</sup>

**7 Jun:** Clashes in mining areas of Tanai Township, Kachin State, forced thousands of people to flee their homes [see *Ethnic Affairs and Conflict*].<sup>93</sup>

**11 Jun:** The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation (KBZF) gave 1,870 food baskets to over 900 Rohingya refugee families in Malaysia.<sup>94</sup>

**19 Jun:** The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that suicide among Burmese refugees in Mae La camp, Thailand, increased at an alarming rate in the last 2 years.<sup>95</sup>

## DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

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### NLD bars members from public criticism of govt, party

On 24-25 June, the National League for Democracy (NLD) banned its members from leaking information to the press and from making social media criticisms against party members or the government. Central Executive Committee member Win Htein said that members can criticize the government and the party through letters or oral discourses, but not through the press or social media.<sup>96</sup> Violators will face sanctions and charges in accordance with the party's rules and regulations.<sup>97</sup>

## ECONOMY

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### China freezes Burmese bank accounts for alleged links to online gambling

On 23 June, about 200 traders in Muse trade zone, Shan State, protested after the Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) froze several traders' accounts on 14 June, over alleged links with online gambling, and illegal transfers in 3 provinces.<sup>98</sup> On the same day, ABC reopened about a third of the accounts.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Karen News (01 Jun 17) KNU support displaced villagers demand for the closure and redeployment of 17 Burma army camps and soldiers

<sup>90</sup> Kaladan Press (02 Jun 17) Body found in Bangladesh refugee camp

<sup>91</sup> Coconuts Yangon (05 Jun 17) Myanmar citizens caught selling Rohingya children for \$300

<sup>92</sup> The Irrawaddy (06 Jun 17) Karen Refugees in Canada Raise Concerns Over State Counselor's Visit

<sup>93</sup> Myanmar Times (07 Jun 17) Three civilians injured, some 2000 trapped in Kachin State conflict

<sup>94</sup> Gulf News (11 Jun 17) UAE charity gives aid to Rohingya refugees

<sup>95</sup> RFA (21 Jun 17) Suicide Have Surged at Thai Refugee Camp, UN Says

<sup>96</sup> Myanmar Times (26 Jun 17) NLD enforces ban against leaks of internal affairs documents; Mizzima (27 Jun 17) NLD will take action if members criticize the government and party in public

<sup>97</sup> Myanmar Times (26 Jun 17) NLD enforces ban against leaks of internal affairs documents

<sup>98</sup> Myanmar Times (26 Jun 17) Several frozen Myanmar accounts cleared by China; Myanmar Times (23 Jun 17) Traders face devastation after China freezes accounts

<sup>99</sup> Myanmar Times (26 Jun 17) Several frozen Myanmar accounts cleared by China

There are varying figures on the number of frozen Burmese/Myanmar citizens' accounts—ranging from 132 according to the Myanmar Ministry of Commerce, to 341 according to Muse District Administrator Kyaw Kyaw Tun.<sup>100</sup>

## NATURAL RESOURCES

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### Issues continue to plague the Kyaukphyu SEZ project

On 9 Jun, extensive research revealed that work on contracts and land acquisition for the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Arakan/Rakhine State had already begun, ahead of environmental and social impact assessments.<sup>101</sup> Legal experts said this could be in breach of national laws. Experts added that while environmental and social assessments had not yet started, Kyaukphyu SEZ's main developer Beijing-based CITIC Group (CITIC.UL) asked Burma to finalize contract terms by the end of 2017 so that the construction could start in 2018. Experts feared that the project was being rushed, since environmental and social preparations would take years to complete.<sup>102</sup>

On 19 Jun, farmers proposed compensation rates for the 250 acres of land, located in 4 village tracts in Kyaukphyu Township, selected for part of the Kyaukphyu SEZ. The farmers proposed up to K90 million (US \$66,000) per acre as compensation for paddy fields, K70 million (US \$51,000) per acre for pastureland and K50 million (US \$36,000) per acre for farmland acquired for the project.<sup>103</sup> The proposal came after a meeting between Kyaukphyu SEZ committee chairman Dr. Soe Win and 63 farmers from Thaing Chaung, Kat Tha Pyay, Chaung Wa and Khandi villages. The Kyaukphyu SEZ committee did not comment on the amounts requested. Arakan National Party's regional MP Phoe San criticized the meeting as lacking transparency and said the authorities should have included lawmakers and local organizations at the meeting and released the discussions to the public.<sup>104</sup>

On 28 Jun, MP Phoe San pointed out at a parliamentary session that nearly K35.5 million (US \$26,000) remained unaccounted for out of the K65 million (US \$47,000) state fund for compensation for the water reservoir project which would provide water for the Kyaukphyu SEZ. Before implementing the project, the Myanmar Kyaukphyu Special Economic Holding Public Company Ltd. (MKSH) negotiated the compensation between the government and the farmers. Divisional minister of mining, agriculture, and livestock Kyaw Lwin said that MKSH withdrew K28 million (US \$20,000) of the fund from the government and deposited it at a local bank. MKSH member Kyaw Soe denied this and said that the company fronted the said amount for seized land but K18.5 million (US \$13,500) was already repaid by the state government.<sup>105</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### UN denies report of Burma's resident coordinator leaving her UN post

On 23 June, the United Nations (UN) denied reports that UN resident coordinator in Burma/Myanmar Renata Lok-Dessallien was being "rotated".<sup>106</sup> On 13 June, media reported that Lok-Dessallien was leaving the UN post for her failure to prioritize human rights, referring to an internal document prepared for the new UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The UN clarified that the Resident Coordinator post in Burma would be elevated to the level of an Assistant Secretary-General to further strengthen collaboration between the UN and Burma.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Myanmar Times (26 Jun 17) Several frozen Myanmar accounts cleared by China

<sup>101</sup> Reuters (9 Jun 17) China's \$10 billion strategic project in Myanmar sparks local ire

<sup>102</sup> Reuters (9 Jun 17) China's \$10 billion strategic project in Myanmar sparks local ire

<sup>103</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) Kyaukphyu Farmers Propose Compensation Rates for Land Lost to SEZ

<sup>104</sup> The Irrawaddy (19 Jun 17) Kyaukphyu Farmers Propose Compensation Rates for Land Lost to SEZ

<sup>105</sup> The Irrawaddy (28 Jun 17) Land Compensation Funds for Kyaukphyu Township are Seemingly Misplaced

<sup>106</sup> Myanmar Times (23 Jun 17) UN strongly rejects reports of removal of top official in Myanmar

<sup>107</sup> Mizzima (23 Jun 17) UN strongly disagrees with statements about UN Resident Coordinator in Myanmar

## REPORTS

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**“Life on hold: Experiences of women displaced by conflict in Kachin State, Myanmar”**, Trocaire & Oxfam <https://goo.gl/EcLFTu>

**“Myanmar: ‘All the Civilians Suffer’: Conflict, Displacement, and Abuse in Northern Myanmar”**, Amnesty International <https://goo.gl/6X1GFP>

**“Parliamentary Development in Myanmar: An Overview of the Union Parliament, 2011-2016”**, The Amnesty International <https://goo.gl/qH2igm>

**“Poor shelter conditions: Threats to health, safety and dignity”**, International Rescue Committee <https://goo.gl/nc8QJw>

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