

COUP WATCH SPECIAL EDITION: A year of struggle in Burma

In the year since the Burma military attempted to launch a coup on 1 Feb 2021, it has critically harmed millions of lives, the national economy, rule of law, natural resources, and governance.

- There were 8,647 armed clashes and attacks on civilians Feb 2021–Jan 2022, a 762% increase from the year preceding (1,003). These numbers were higher than those in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, or Iraq.
- The junta's widespread and systematic atrocity crimes increased over time. Junta troops destroyed and blocked humanitarian aid, shelled and conducted airstrikes on towns, burned civilians alive, committed rape and perfidy, and destroyed hundreds of homes. As of 26 Jan 2022, it had arrested at least 286 healthcare workers and killed 30.
- Widespread civilian protests were met with widespread junta violence. As of 31 Jan 2022, the junta had arrested at least 11,838 civilians, tortured hundreds of detainees, and used lethal force against protesters repeatedly, including by ramming vehicles into them; and 2,610 civilians had been killed as a result of coup-related violence.
- The junta weaponized the judiciary and punished rivals in military courts. As of 1 Jan 2022, it had jailed 649 opposition NLD party members; 14 died in detention.
- The junta turned Burma into the world's second highest jailer of journalists. By 21 Jan 2022, it had jailed 120—including four female editors, one female co-founder, one female photojournalist, and 16 female reporters—and killed three.
- The junta was negligent in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly allowing hundreds of thousands to die, a number difficult to confirm because of the junta's failure to accurately report cases and deaths. It increased the death toll by maliciously withholding oxygen from clinics and private hospitals.
- The World Bank said that Burma's economy shrank by 18% in 2021 and was set to grow only 1% in 2022. The Myanmar kyat (MMK) lost over half its value, pushing up domestic costs, and UNDP forecast that 46.3% of residents would be in poverty by early 2022.
- The junta tried to maintain economic power through natural resource extraction and oil and gas revenue. However, businesses left Burma, recognizing the legal, reputational, and operational challenges of working or investing there. Some of the world's largest economies, including the EU, US, and UK enacted sanctions to prevent junta atrocities.

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ALTSEAN-Burma has tracked the most important updates during this time in its online thematic [Coups Trackers](#), and summarized these updates by publishing a [Coups Watch](#) briefer each month. This special edition of the Coups Watch draws on these tools to provide a one-year overview.

CONFLICT

There were 8,647 armed clashes and attacks on civilians Feb 2021–Jan 2022, a 762% increase from the year before (1,003). Just in January 2022, there were more incidents than in the year preceding the attempted coup. These numbers were higher than those in the world's worst conflicts, and exceeded Syria and Afghanistan combined in all months Sep 2021–Jan 2022.¹

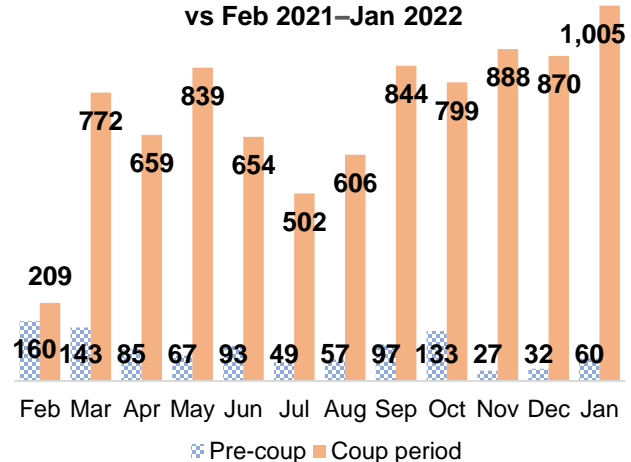
Junta troops frequently (and increasingly) committed **war crimes** and **crimes against humanity**. For example:

- Junta troops **destroyed food stores** and **blocked humanitarian aid**. On 10 June, in Moebye, Pekon Township (Shan State), junta forces burned 80 sacks of rice and medical supplies meant for IDPs.² In July, the junta reportedly allowed only around 450kg of rice to enter Mindat (Chin State) each day—not enough to feed residents—despite a ceasefire and humanitarian agreement.³ Similarly, during Burma's third wave of COVID-19, junta forces **targeted doctors** and **intentionally deprived people of medicines and oxygen**; by January 2022 they had **arrested at least 286 healthcare workers** and **killed 30**.⁴
- In July, junta troops **massacred at least 40 people** in Kani Township (Sagaing Region), with many of the bodies showing clear signs of **torture**. Earlier in the month, over 10,000 Kani residents had fled junta raids in which **soldiers stole and destroyed villagers' property, laid landmines, and poisoned water supplies** by dumping insecticides into reservoirs.⁵
- In early September, the junta terrorized civilians in Thantlang Township (Chin State) by **firing guns and heavy artillery, indiscriminately and aimed at the town**,⁶ before stationing 200 soldiers in Thantlang town and commencing daily fly-overs.⁷ On 19 Sep, they opened fire on the town with heavy weapons and artillery, causing all 8,000

Armed clashes and attacks on civilians by country, Feb 2021–Jan 2022

	Burma	Syria	Yemen	Afghan.	Iraq
Feb	209	777	606	778	212
Mar	772	716	743	820	220
Apr	659	616	629	989	291
May	839	654	460	1,121	498
Jun	654	817	494	1,139	402
Jul	502	837	521	856	365
Aug	606	725	502	491	527
Sep	844	696	527	91	480
Oct	799	651	590	129	373
Nov	888	631	613	118	230
Dec	870	631	594	143	267
Jan	1,005	774	692	177	216
Total	8,647	8,525	6,971	6,845	4,081

Armed clashes and attacks on civilians in Burma, Feb 2020–Jan 2021 vs Feb 2021–Jan 2022



¹ All data in the charts on this page and the map on the following page comes from the ACLED Data Export Tool (updated 9 Feb 2022), available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>. The event sub-types included in this calculation are Abduction/forced disappearance, Air/drone strike, Armed clash, Arrests, Attack, Excessive force against protesters, Grenade, Looting/property destruction, Protest with intervention, Sexual violence, and Shelling/artillery/missile attack.

² Irrawaddy (11 Jun 2021) Regime Destroys Food and Medicine for Refugees in Southeastern Myanmar

³ Myanmar Now (10 Jul 2021) Transport of food, medicine restricted despite temporary ceasefire extension in Mindat

⁴ Physicians for Human Rights (26 Jan 2022) 415 Attacks on Health Care in Myanmar During One Year of Crackdowns Following Military Coup: Report

⁵ Myanmar Now (30 Jul 2021) Junta soldiers massacred at least 28 people in resistance stronghold of Kani this month, say residents; Myanmar Now (13 Jul 2021) Locals find bodies in forest after 15 men 'massacred' in Sagaing Region; Irrawaddy (3 Aug 2021) Junta Massacres 40 People in Myanmar Resistance Stronghold During July; Irrawaddy (19 Aug 2021) Myanmar's Shadow Govt Reports Junta's Massacres of Civilians to UN Security Council

⁶ Myanmar Now (8 Sep 2021) Civilian allegedly injured in clash in Chin State capital; Myanmar Now (11 Sep 2021) Two junta soldiers reportedly killed in Chin State battle

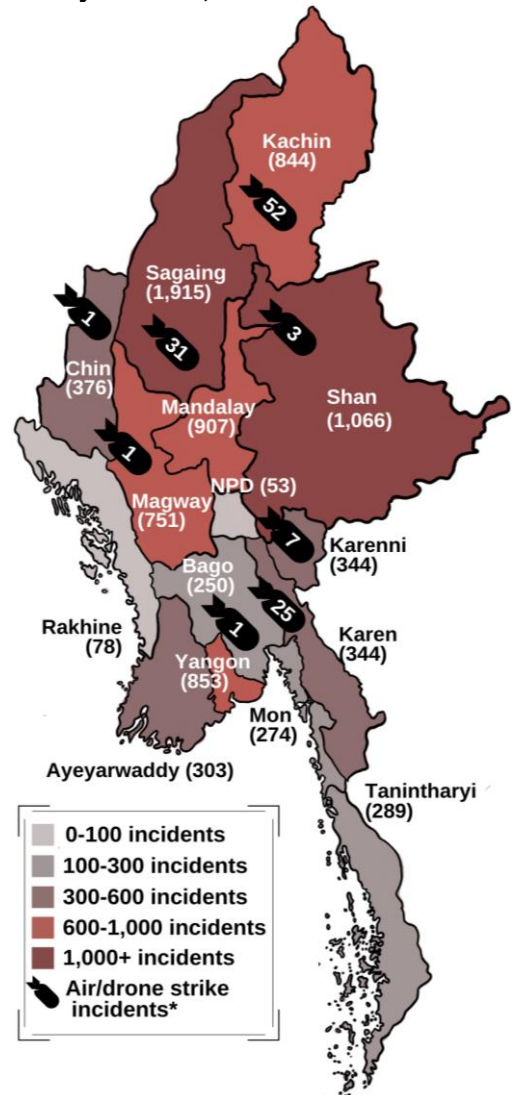
⁷ Myanmar Now (16 Sep 2021) Entire population of Chin village sheltering along Indian border, in need of aid

residents to flee.⁸ Thantlang was still a ghost town on 29 Oct, when junta forces **destroyed more than 160 of its 2,000 homes, two churches, several local CSO offices, and a Save the Children office.**⁹

- On 24 Dec, junta forces **captured at least 37 men, women, and children fleeing conflict** in Moso village, Hpruso Township (Karenni State), tied the victims' hands behind their backs, placed them in cars, and then torched the vehicles, **burning them alive.**¹⁰
- In December and January, junta forces began **airstrikes** around Lay Kay Kaw (Karen State) and Loikaw (Karenni State), respectively, **displacing around 50,000 people.**¹¹ Even before the airstrikes, over half of Karenni State's 300,000 residents were displaced.¹² As of 1 Feb 2022, UNHCR reported that 442,000 people had been displaced since 1 Feb and remained so,¹³ a *significant* underestimate according to local sources.
- On 16 Nov, junta forces captured nine female People's Defense Force (PDF) medics and two others during a raid in Kalay (Sagaing Region), **tortured at least three to death**, and used the others as **human shields.**¹⁴
- As of December, Women's League of Burma had documented nine cases of **rape** by junta troops.¹⁵
- Junta troops committed **perfidy**. In May, in Mindat Township (Chin State), they disguised themselves as IDPs until they got close enough to open fire on Chin resistance forces.¹⁶ In June, they reportedly pretended to be fleeing civilians to attack PDF members in Mingin Township (Sagaing Region).¹⁷

Members of other armed groups also committed atrocity crimes, but were more likely to be held accountable. On 20 Jan 2022, it was reported that the Karen National Union (KNU) had removed a Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) commander involved in the killing of 25 civilians in June 2021.¹⁸

Armed clashes and attacks on civilians by location, Feb 2021–Jan 2022



*ACLED often codes a single strike when there are multiple strikes in a location on a day (e.g., ACLED notes 17 strikes during 24–30 Apr 2021, but more extensive research shows 68 strikes in Kachin and Karen States in that interval).

⁸ Irrawaddy (20 Sep 2021) Residents of Town in Myanmar's Chin State Flee Junta Artillery Barrage

⁹ Myanmar Now (30 Oct 2021) More than 160 homes burn down in junta shelling of Chin State town

¹⁰ Myanmar Now (25 Dec 2021) At least 35 charred bodies found in Karenni State village on Christmas; Mizzima (27 Dec 2021) Myanmar army accused of trying to destroy evidence of Kayah State fiery massacre

¹¹ Irrawaddy (27 Dec 2021) Myanmar Regime Continues to Shell Karen State Border Town; Irrawaddy (12 Jan 2022) Myanmar Junta Airstrikes Continue in Kayah State

¹² Karenni Civil Society Network (22 Dec 2021) Bi-weekly situation update by the Karenni Civil Society Network, Dec 6 –Dec 19, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=203888512929156&set=pcb.2038885512929117>

¹³ UNHCR (1 Feb 2022) Myanmar emergency update

¹⁴ Myanmar Now (17 Nov 2021) Soldiers capture PDF medics during raid on resistance base camp in Kalay; Myanmar Now (21 Nov 2021) Discovery of bodies heightens concern for detained women

¹⁵ Radio Free Asia (5 Dec 2021) Coup brings uptick in old scourge: sexual violence by Myanmar troops

¹⁶ Myanmar Now (23 May 2021) Regime soldiers 'disguised themselves as civilians fleeing their homes' to ambush Chin resistance fighters

¹⁷ Irrawaddy (25 Jun 2021) 15 Myanmar Troops Killed in Sagaing Region Firefight

¹⁸ EMG (20 Jan 2022) KNDO Commander Maj-Gen Saw Nerdah Mya dismissed from duty and replaced by deputy commander

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT (CDM) AND JUNTA CRACKDOWNS

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing has tried his best to consolidate power in the face of widespread protest. On 1 Aug, he declared himself caretaker prime minister to pose as a civilian leader. He **backtracked on his initial promise to hold elections by Feb 2022**, postponing them until Aug 2023. The junta moved to reform the electoral system so military-aligned parties can secure more seats in future elections.

The junta tried to destroy the NLD party by **sentencing top officials—on bogus charges**—including President Win Myint, Naypyidaw Mayor Myo Aung, and the Chief Ministers of Mandalay, Magway, Rakhine, Tanintharyi, Mon, Shan, and Karen States/Regions.¹⁹ Ousted State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi **faces up to 191 years in prison** and had been sentenced to six years as of 10 Jan. 2022²⁰ As of 1 Jan 2022, the junta had reportedly **arrested 649 NLD members**, of whom 489 remained in detention. **Fourteen had died in custody**, including one MP.²¹

Junta forces **used lethal force against peaceful protesters**, including by killing at least 82 demonstrators in Bago on 9 Apr,²² and opening fire on and rammed a truck into demonstrators in Yangon, killing five, on 5 Dec.²³ As of 31 Jan, at least 2,610 civilians had been killed due to conflict spurred by the coup.²⁴

The junta **weaponized the judiciary** to crack down further. As of 27 Dec 2022, military courts had **sentenced over 100 people to death**.²⁵ On 30 Dec, they sentenced at least 62 opponents.²⁶ As of 31 Jan, junta troops had arrested at least 11,838 politicians, activists, and others.²⁷ They **targeted relatives of people evading arrest**, including children; they were holding over 170 such hostages as of 5 Oct.²⁸ They also **systematically tortured detainees** and transformed community halls, a royal palace, and other public facilities into interrogation centers.²⁹ As of 11 Nov, at least 65 people had died within a day of their arrest.³⁰

The junta **cracked down on freedom of expression and access to information**. It amended the 2015 Broadcasting Law, lengthening its prison sentences and extending its scope of application to criminalize online criticism of the regime.³¹ On 8 Dec, it doubled the price of data packages to limit access.³² It also **turned Burma into the second biggest jailer of journalists**.³³ As of 21 Jan, it had arrested 120 journalists and media staff and killed three. It charged and/or revoked the licenses of 12 news outlets.³⁴

¹⁹ Myanmar Now (6 Dec 2021) Junta sentences Suu Kyi, Win Myint to four years in prison each; Myanmar Now (8 Dec 2021) Ousted Mandalay chief minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung handed 4-year prison sentence; Myanmar Now (31 Dec 2021) NLD leaders, student activists receive prison sentences in year-end blitz; Radio Free Asia (30 Dec 21) Dozens of politicians, activists sentenced in secret Myanmar military tribunals; Irrawaddy (19 Jan 2022) Myanmar Junta Jails Rakhine State Ministers on Corruption Charges; Irrawaddy (12 Nov 2021) Tanintharyi Chief Minister Jailed for 11 Years by Myanmar Junta; EMG (22 Dec 2021) Ex-chief ministers Dr Aye Zan and Dr Myint Naing sentenced to two years in prison for incitement; Mizzima (29 Jan 2022) Shan State Chief Minister sentenced to 16 years in prison on corruption charges; Irrawaddy (23 Dec 2021) New Conviction Pushes Sentence to 80 Years for Jailed Chief Minister of Myanmar's Karen State

²⁰ Myanmar Now (10 Jan 2022) Myanmar junta sentences Suu Kyi to four more years in prison; Irrawaddy (17 Jan 2022) Suu Kyi to Face 164 Years Imprisonment as Myanmar Junta Adds Five More Charges

²¹ Mizzima (5 Jan 2022) Nearly 500 NLD party members arrested since February 2021 coup; Radio Free Asia (3 Jan 2022) Three-fourths of NLD members arrested since Myanmar coup still detained, says party

²² Washington Post (25 Aug 2021) Anatomy of a crackdown

²³ Myanmar Now (5 Dec 2021) Regime troops ram into protesters, killing at least five

²⁴ ACLED Data Export Tool (updated 9 Feb 2022), available at <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

²⁵ Radio Free Asia (27 Jan 2022) More than 100 sentenced to death in Yangon since Myanmar coup

²⁶ Myanmar Now (31 Dec 2021) NLD leaders, student activists receive prison sentences in year-end blitz; Radio Free Asia (30 Dec 21) Dozens of politicians, activists sentenced in secret Myanmar military tribunals

²⁷ Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (31 Jan 2022) Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup

²⁸ Irrawaddy (5 Oct 2021) Myanmar Junta Takes Family Member as Old as 94 Hostage

²⁹ AP (28 Oct 2021) Myanmar military uses systematic torture across country

³⁰ Myanmar Now (11 Nov 2021) Relatives fear for safety of ousted NLD lawmaker detained with his brother

³¹ Centre for Law and Democracy (8 Nov 2021) Myanmar: Analysis of Amendments to the Broadcasting Law

³² Mizzima (12 Dec 2021) Junta chips away at freedom of expression and communication for Myanmar citizens

³³ Committee to Protect Journalists (8 Dec 2021) How Myanmar became the world's second-worst jailer of journalists

³⁴ Reporting ASEAN (accessed 25 Jan 2022) IN NUMBERS: Arrests of Journalists and Media Staff in Myanmar; CPJ (14 Jan 2022) Myanmar journalist killed in military massacre, another killed in artillery strike

WOMEN

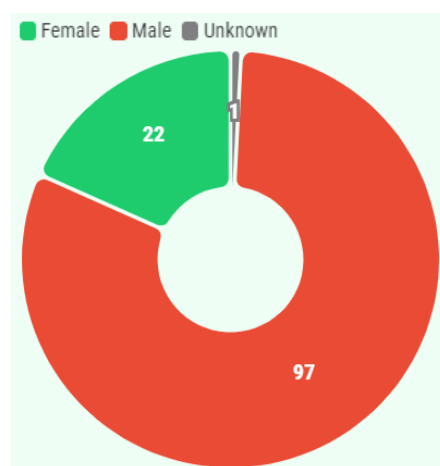
Even before the attempted coup began, Burma lacked a comprehensive national protection system for women, making it difficult to address violence against them, particularly those from ethnic and religious minorities. The coup effectively ended prospects of equity for women or accountability for perpetrators of gender-based violence. It also enabled the military, which has historically perpetrated atrocities against women, to continue doing so without any accountability.

Since 1 Feb 2021, women and girls have taken a leading role on Burma's frontlines, organizing peaceful rallies and advocating for human rights and democracy in varied and innovative ways. Women civil servants were the first to strike in protest and call for a return to democracy.³⁵

Junta soldiers have targeted women through extrajudicial killings, widespread arbitrary detention, sexual assault, and gender-based violence. Over 2,000 of those detained since 1 Feb 2021 are women.³⁶ As of December 2021, junta security forces had killed 94 women during offensives, interrogations, or anti-junta rallies.³⁷ On 4 Jan 2022, junta airstrikes killed a woman in Gahe, Indaw Township (Sagaing Region), and two 15-year-old girls, a five-year-old girl, and an eight-year-old boy remained missing after the attack.³⁸ On 13 Jan, a 15-year-old girl was killed by indiscriminate junta fire in Aungmyethazan Township (Mandalay).³⁹ On 19 Jan, an eight-year-old girl died after stepping on a landmine while she was throwing away garbage in a public rubbish dump in Kyaikmaraw Township (Mon State).⁴⁰

Women from ethnic minority communities were particularly vulnerable. As of 28 Jan 2022, 177 women had been killed due to coup-related violence, 49 of whom were in Burma's ethnic States. Women's League of Burma (WLB), an umbrella organization of 13 women's organizations of varied ethnic backgrounds, documented **at least nine rapes and one sexual assault during Feb–Dec 2021**, in Chin, Kachin, Shan, Sagaing and Yangon States/Regions.⁴¹ This figure is likely low, because fear of reprisals and threats from the military often result in underreporting.

Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing was the first protester to die in the anti-coup demonstrations, on 19 Feb 2021, when security forces shot her in the head.⁴² Ma Kyal Sin, or 'Angel,' a 19-year-old wearing a t-shirt saying "Everything will be OK," quickly became a symbol of the bloody struggle for democracy after she was shot in the head during a rally and died on 3 Mar 2021.⁴³



Reporting ASEAN (updated 10 Jan 2022)
Tracking the arrest of journalists in Myanmar

According to Reporting ASEAN, as of 10 Jan 2022, 120 journalists and media staff had been arrested in Burma since 1 Feb 2021. Of these, 22 were women, including **4 female editors, 1 female co-founder, 1 female photojournalist, 16 female reporters**.⁴⁴

³⁵ UN Human Rights (10 Dec 2021) Press briefing notes on Myanmar

³⁶ BBC (9 Dec 2021) Myanmar coup: The women abused and tortured in detention

³⁷ RFA (12 Dec 2021) Nearly 100 women killed by security forces since Myanmar coup

³⁸ Mizzima (7 Jan 2022) Fighter jets blast Gahe village in Myanmar's Sagaing region killing one person; Mizzima (7 Jan 2022)

Fighter jets blast Gahe village in Myanmar's Sagaing region killing one person

³⁹ Myanmar Now (15 Jan 2022) Girl killed and two others injured as soldiers open fire after Mandalay blast

⁴⁰ Mon News Agency (20 Jan 2022) 8-year-old killed in a landmine explosion in kyaikmaraw township

⁴¹ RFA (28 Dec 2021) Nearly 100 women killed by security forces since Myanmar coup; Women's League of Burma (27 Dec 2021)

Situation Update: October & November 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/wlbpower/photos/5365991296762551>

⁴² Mizzima (19 Feb 2021) Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing dies: hospital

⁴³ BBC (4 Mar 2021) Myanmar coup: 'Everything will be OK' teenage protester mourned

⁴⁴ Reporting ASEAN (updated 10 Jan 2022) Tracking the arrest of journalists in Myanmar

COVID-19

The attempted coup threw Burma's COVID-19 response into disarray. Most of the country's 1,777 government hospitals stopped functioning properly due to staff shortages;⁴⁵ and testing dropped from an average 17,000 daily tests in January to just a few thousand in the following months.⁴⁶ As of 26 Jan 2022, the junta had acknowledged 19,310 COVID-19-related deaths since 2020.⁴⁷ By contrast, an investigation by Frontier Myanmar revealed that **the true death toll may be in the hundreds of thousands**.⁴⁸

Burma saw a rapid rise in COVID-19 infections starting in May 2021, with 296 of 330 townships reporting cases by 10 Jul.⁴⁹ Hospitals were quickly overwhelmed and deaths soared amid oxygen shortages.⁵⁰ The junta worsened the problem by **hoarding oxygen and restricting its sale** to facilities under its control.⁵¹

On 12 Jul, the junta admitted it lacked control of the situation as COVID-19 ripped through the military.⁵² Nonetheless, it **continued to target striking healthcare workers and charities** involved in pandemic response. On 19 Jul, security forces **tricked three Yangon doctors working for a charity into responding to a fake emergency call**, arrested them, raided their office, arrested two more doctors, and confiscated oxygen, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medicine.⁵³

The junta marginalized detained and displaced populations in its response. On 23 Jul, detainees protested the lack of COVID-19 treatment and prevention in Insein Prison,⁵⁴ reportedly supported by prison staff. **Junta troops opened fire on inmates**, reportedly killing at least 20.⁵⁵ The junta's vaccination program initially **excluded** Burma's stateless **Rohingya community**.⁵⁶ Only 20,000 people from "Muslim IDP camps" were ultimately vaccinated, out of an estimated 200,000 "Muslim IDPs" in Rakhine State.⁵⁷

The junta finally tried to increase vaccination in August 2021. It **weaponized vaccine distribution**—illustrated by its arrest of a former political prisoner after he received his jab.⁵⁸ On 22 Aug, it was reported that **most people refused to be inoculated** due to mistrust of the junta and vaccines from China.⁵⁹ On 17 Sep, the junta claimed that the pandemic was "under control" and **refused a UN request for expanded access** to deliver COVID-19 assistance.⁶⁰ On 2 Dec 2021, UNOCHA warned that **low vaccination rates could lead to a damaging fourth wave in 2022**.⁶¹ As of 22 Jan 2021, only 18.25 million people had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and a further 3.49 million had received their first shot, from a population of 54.4 million.⁶²

⁴⁵ Frontier Myanmar (23 Jun 2021) CDM crunch: Striking doctors struggle to meet healthcare needs

⁴⁶ Kyodo News (29 Jun 2021) Coronavirus cases surge in coup-hit Myanmar, vaccinations lag

⁴⁷ EMG (27 Jan 2022) Myanmar reports 120 new patients on Jan 26

⁴⁸ Frontier Myanmar (14 Jan 2022) COVID cover up: third wave death toll may be in hundreds of thousands

⁴⁹ Irrawaddy (10 Jul 2021) Myanmar's Third Wave of COVID-19 Spreads to Almost 90% of Townships

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (8 Jul 2021) Myanmar Hospitals Run Out of Beds Amid COVID-19 Surge; Irrawaddy (21 Jul 2021) As Myanmar Regime Mishandles COVID-19, More Than 2,000 People Die in Three Weeks

⁵¹ Irrawaddy (12 Jul 2021) Myanmar Suffering From Severe Shortage of Medical Oxygen as COVID-19 Cases Spike; Myanmar Now (14 Jul 2021) Social welfare organisations overwhelmed by escalating Covid-19 death toll; New York Times (15 Jul 2021) As Covid Rages in Myanmar, Army Hoards Oxygen, Doctors Say

⁵² Irrawaddy (14 Jul 2021) Myanmar Junta Says it Can't Cope With Rising COVID-19 Cases; Myanmar Now (21 Jul 2021) Soldiers, officers and their families have been infected nationwide, with generals and commanders included among the sick

⁵³ Irrawaddy (20 Jul 2021) Myanmar Junta Arrests Doctors After Luring Them With Fake COVID 'Emergency'

⁵⁴ Reuters (24 Jul 2021) Protest breaks out at prison in Myanmar's biggest city

⁵⁵ Agencia EFE (25 Jul 2021) At least 20 killed in Yangon prison riot crackdown: local media

⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (13 Aug 2021) Rohingya Without Myanmar ID Not Being Given COVID-19 Jab: Junta

⁵⁷ Development Media Group (21 Aug 2021) 50,000 IDPs in Arakan State slated to receive Covid vaccine in upcoming round of jabs

⁵⁸ Irrawaddy (6 Aug 2021) Myanmar Charity Secretary Detained After COVID-19 Vaccination

⁵⁹ Radio Free Asia (5 Aug 2021) Myanmar Citizens Reject Junta's Immunization Plans and Chinese COVID-19 Vaccines; Mizzima (22 Aug 2021) Myanmar junta's COVID-19 programme comes in for criticism

⁶⁰ Myanmar Now (17 Sep 2021) During a top UNOCHA official's trip to Myanmar, the military council's health minister reportedly refused to facilitate conditions for greater Covid-19-related aid distribution

⁶¹ UNOCHA (2 Dec 2021) Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

⁶² World Bank (accessed 27 Jan 2022) Population, total - Myanmar; Global New Light of Myanmar (24 Jan 2022) Second batch of Covaxin COVID-19 vaccine (1 mln doses) donated by Nippon Foundation arrives in Yangon

BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

The World Bank estimated that **Burma's economy shrank by 18% in 2021 and forecast 1% growth in 2022**. On 26 Dec, it said that Burma's **economy could have been 30% larger** without the pandemic and coup.⁶³ The IMF projected 2.4–2.5% annual growth for 2023–2026, significantly lower than its 2020 forecast of 6.4–6.5% for 2022–2025.⁶⁴

The **Myanmar kyat (MMK) lost over half its value in 2021**; it reached an all-time low of MMK 3,000 to 1 USD on 30 Sep,⁶⁵ from 1,330 MMK to the dollar in January 2021.⁶⁶ As of 7 Jan 2022, the junta-controlled Central Bank of Myanmar had auctioned off USD 443.8 million to stabilize exchange rates.⁶⁷ On 22 Dec, the junta tried to address US dollar shortages by accepting China's RMB as an official settlement currency.⁶⁸

The kyat's plummet **pushed up the prices of food, gas, and other imported goods**. Fuel prices more than doubled,⁶⁹ impacting the entire economy. The price of rice had increased by 40% as of late September.⁷⁰ On 1 Dec, UNDP said that **46.3% of the population would be living below the poverty line by early 2022**, from 24.8% in 2017.⁷¹ On 2 Dec, UNOCHA projected that **14.4 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2022**, up from 1 million in 2021.⁷²

The junta's policies triggered a **national banking crisis**. Internet restrictions in the aftermath of the coup gravely affected digital payment services, with **e-commerce down 75%**.⁷³ Around 80% of the country's bank branches were also shuttered.⁷⁴ They have since struggled to reopen, and many banks reportedly became **"zombie banks"** after the value of their assets fell below their deposit liabilities.⁷⁵

Widespread public boycotts of military products, utility bills, and taxes dried up fiscal revenue, with the junta reporting a **35% drop in tax earnings in fiscal year 2020–2021**.⁷⁶ By September, popular refusal to pay electricity bills had cost the junta USD 1 billion in potential revenue.⁷⁷ Increased military expenditures prompted the regime to print new money, further fueling inflationary pressure.⁷⁸

The regime turned to natural resource extraction to fund itself, derailing efforts to develop climate resilience.⁷⁹ In December, Global Witness reported that **illegal mining had boomed** since 1 Feb 2021. Junta soldiers **extorted payments for the right to dig rubies and gemstones**; and the junta held **gemstone fairs** to secure much-needed foreign currency.⁸⁰ Multinational jewelry companies and mass market retailers

⁶³ Bangkok Post (26 Jan 2022) World Bank sees 'critically weak' outlook for Myanmar this year

⁶⁴ Nikkei Asia (19 Oct 2021) Myanmar FDI drops to 8-year low, reflecting post-takeover unrest

⁶⁵ Reuters (29 Sep 2021) Myanmar currency drops 60% in weeks as economy tanks since February coup; Myanmar Now (30 Sep 2021) Kyat continues freefall as Myanmar faces full-blown currency crisis

⁶⁶ GNLM (5 Sep 2021) USD against MMK hits around K1,800

⁶⁷ Democratic Voice of Burma, via Twitter (10 Jan 2022) https://twitter.com/DVB_English/status/1480417911709650945

⁶⁸ Reuters (22 Dec 2021) Myanmar seeks closer China ties with Renminbi trade project

⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (30 Sep 2021) Price of Fuel in Myanmar Has More Than Doubled Since Junta's Coup

⁷⁰ Reuters (29 Sep 2021) Myanmar currency drops 60% in weeks as economy tanks since February coup

⁷¹ Nikkei Asia (1 Dec 2021) Half of Myanmar will live on less than a dollar a day, says UNDP

⁷² UNOCHA (2 Dec 2021) Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

⁷³ Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime

⁷⁴ Irrawaddy (22 Apr 2021) Myanmar's Economy in Freefall Under Military Regime; Frontier Myanmar (5 May 2021) As striking staff return to work, Myanmar's banks face a cash crunch; GIZ (Jan 2021) Myanmar's Banking Sector in Stormy Waters

⁷⁵ Staying on the reform course before and amidst COVID-19 crisis

⁷⁶ Myanmar Now (18 Aug 2021) Expert economists: Military's management of Myanmar's banking system is catastrophic and incompetent

⁷⁷ Myanmar Now (12 Jan 2022) Tax revenue falls by more than a third under coup regime

⁷⁸ RFA (15 Sep 2021) Electricity Bill Boycott Denies Myanmar Military US \$1 Billion in Power Revenues Since Coup

⁷⁹ Irrawaddy (9 Dec 2021) Uzbek Plane Supplies Myanmar Junta with Banknote Paper.

⁸⁰ Al Jazeera (1 Dec 2021) Climate danger grows in 'vulnerable' Myanmar after military coup

⁸⁰ Global Witness (15 Dec 2021) International ruby sales funding Myanmar military, armed groups and human rights abuses – buyers include top jewellery brands; Global Witness (15 Dec 2021) Conflict Rubies: How luxury jewellers risk funding military abuses in Myanmar

like Walmart continued to hide behind the complexity of gemstone supply chains to sell Burmese gemstones despite international sanctions.⁸¹

Oil and gas companies provided a lifeline to the junta by making payments to the state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), which is expected to earn **USD 1.5 billion** in 2021-2022.⁸² In January 2022, Chevron (US), TotalEnergies (France), and Woodside Petroleum (Australia) announced that they would leave Burma.⁸³ Their shares will likely be absorbed by companies that keep making payments to the regime, including POSCO (Korea), Petronas (Malaysia), PTTEP (Thailand), ONGC (India), GAIL (India), KOGAS (South Korea), ENEOS (Japan), and Mitsubishi (Japan).⁸⁴

Foreign investment fell to an eight-year low, at USD 3.8 billion Sep 2020–Sep 2021, a 22% drop from the previous year.⁸⁵ Other foreign companies that had announced their withdrawal from Burma as of 8 Feb 2022 include: Australia’s Myanmar Metals (mining); France’s Electricite de France (hydropower/mining); Germany’s Metro (retail/wholesale); Hong Kong’s Hong Kong and Shanghai Hotels (hospitality) and V Power Group (mining/quarrying); India’s Adani Ports (logistics); Japan’s Kirin (beer), AEON (retail/malls), Toyota (car manufacturing), and Bridgestone (rubber); Norway’s Telenor (telecommunications); Singapore’s Lim Kaling (food and beverage), Sembcorp (real estate); Switzerland’s Kempinski Hotels; Taiwan’s KOI (food and beverage); Thailand’s Amata Corp (real estate); the US’s Auntie Anne’s (food and beverage); and the UK’s British American Tobacco.⁸⁶



⁸¹ Justice for Myanmar (24 Nov 2021) US Retailers Trading in Myanmar Gems, Despite Sanctions; Global Witness (15 Dec 2021) Conflict Rubies: How luxury jewellers risk funding military abuses in Myanmar

⁸² AP (16 Dec 2021) Myanmar public urges gas sanctions to stop military funding

⁸³ Guardian (21 Jan 2022) Chevron and Total withdraw from Myanmar gas project; Guardian (27 Jan 2022) Woodside Petroleum to pull out of Myanmar one year on from military coup

⁸⁴ Myanmar Now (21 Jan 2022) Anti-junta activists celebrate major win as Chevron and Total announce plans to exit Myanmar

⁸⁵ Nikkei Asia (19 Oct 2021) Myanmar FDI drops to 8-year low, reflecting post-takeover unrest

⁸⁶ Mizzima (8 Feb 2022) Two dozen foreign investors have exited in wake of Myanmar coup

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

UN actors repeatedly condemned the attempted coup and the junta's atrocity crimes,⁸⁷ but failed to deliver tangible actions, due in part to a deadlock at the UNSC.⁸⁸ The UN General Assembly denied credentials to junta representatives and allowed civilian representative Kyaw Moe Tun to keep his seat,⁸⁹ and the UN allowed neither junta nor NUG representatives to participate in the environmental summit COP26.⁹⁰ The junta has denied entry to the UN Special Envoy, and shut down the envoy's Burma office in December 2021.⁹¹ It also continued to deny access to UN human rights monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

ASEAN bent from its policy of non-interference, under international pressure, but remained ineffective. Its 24 Apr 2021 summit on Burma resulted in a Five-Point Consensus, prescribing peace and political dialogue facilitated by an ASEAN envoy.⁹² ASEAN named a Special Envoy in August,⁹³ but blocked the junta from attending two October summits after the junta's failure to meet its commitments from April.⁹⁴ Cambodia became ASEAN chair in 2022, thwarting ASEAN collective action and reopening doors for the junta.⁹⁵

The **US, UK, EU members**, and others quickly enacted sanctions and condemned the junta.⁹⁶ In total, the international community froze billions of dollars and put immense pressure on individuals and corporations providing revenue for the junta. **Russia** continued to support the junta, including through military and economic collaboration.⁹⁷ **China** initially minimized the coup's gravity;⁹⁸ mitigated its stance by meeting with NLD members and attempting to mediate negotiations with EAOs;⁹⁹ and finally donated a military submarine to the junta in late 2021.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, **Japan** voiced condemnation, suspended development aid, and denied junta officials diplomatic passports, before walking back most of these measures; it also maintained a military-to-military training program with the junta.¹⁰¹ **Australia** did nothing.¹⁰²

Armed actors and fires made life harder for Rohingya people in Bangladesh refugee camps.¹⁰³ Bangladesh continued its relocation of Rohingya refugees to the remote, ill-equipped, and cyclone-prone Bhasan Char island.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, legal cases focused on crimes against Rohingya people continued at the International Criminal Court (ICC), at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and in Argentina.

⁸⁷ UN Press Release (31 January 2021) Secretary-General Condemns Detention of Myanmar Political Leaders as 'Serious Blow to Democratic Reforms', Urges Peaceful Dialogue; UN Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights (1 Feb 2021) Comment by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on Myanmar; UN Human Rights Council (6 Jul 2021) Oral update on Myanmar: Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

⁸⁸ Anadolu Agency (6 Mar 2021) UN Security Council deadlocked on Myanmar

⁸⁹ Progressive Voice (6 Dec 2021) Civil society welcomes the UN General Assembly's decision to reject the Myanmar military junta, urges the UN to cease all forms of cooperation that lend them legitimacy

⁹⁰ Radio Free Asia (10 Nov 2021) Myanmar's junta blocked from attending global climate summit

⁹¹ Bangkok Post (9 Apr 2021) Myanmar won't admit UN envoy; Irrawaddy (21 Dec 2021) Myanmar Junta Shuttters UN Special Envoy's Office

⁹² ASEAN (24 Apr 2021) Chairman's Statement on the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting

⁹³ Reuters (4 Aug 2021) ASEAN appoints Brunei diplomat as envoy to Myanmar

⁹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Brunei Darussalam (16 Oct 2021) Statement of the Chair of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting; Irrawaddy (19 Nov 2021) Myanmar Coup Leader Min Aung Hlaing Barred From China-ASEAN Summit

⁹⁵ Khmer Times (21 Jan 2022) Vietnam says PM's Myanmar trip helps mediation efforts

⁹⁶ Baker McKenzie (updated 23 Jun 2021) Sanctions targeting Myanmar; Government of Canada (18 February 2021) Regulations Amending the Special Economic Measures (Burma) Regulations; Al Jazeera (9 Feb 2021) New Zealand suspends Myanmar political, military ties after coup; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea (13 Mar 2021) Korean Government's Measures on Situation in Myanmar; Reuters (12 Mar 2021) More protests held in Myanmar as South Korea suspends defence exchanges

⁹⁷ TASS (1 Dec 2021) Domestic situation in Myanmar should be settled without external meddling, Putin says

⁹⁸ BBC News (3 Feb 2021) Myanmar coup: China blocks UN condemnation as protest grows

⁹⁹ Irrawaddy (27 Aug 2021) China Doesn't Want Myanmar's NLD Dissolved: Informed Sources; Irrawaddy (17 Dec 2021) China Facilitates Myanmar Junta and Ethnic Armies' Talks

¹⁰⁰ Irrawaddy (27 Dec 2021) China Provides Submarine to Myanmar Junta

¹⁰¹ Kyodo News (4 Mar 2021) Japan urges Myanmar forces to stop violence against protesters; Bangkok Post (30 Mar 2021) Japan suspends new aid to Myanmar over military coup; Nikkei Asia (19 Jan 2022) Japan's government should stop training Myanmar's military

¹⁰² Justice for Myanmar 1 Feb 2022) One year later: what has been done to stop the Myanmar military's atrocity crimes

¹⁰³ Al Jazeera (16 Jan 2022) Bangladesh arrests brother of Rohingya armed group leader; Mizzima (10 Jan 2022) Fire at Bangladesh Rohingya camp leaves thousands homeless

¹⁰⁴ Diplomat (8 Feb 2022) Bhasan Char and Refugee 'Warehousing'

CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT (CRPH AND NUG)

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the National Unity Government (NUG) are Burma's legitimate civilian authorities.¹⁰⁵ They have repeatedly said that the junta's State Administrative Council (SAC) has no legislative, executive, or judicial power. The NUG is Burma's most ethnically-diverse government yet (with a Kachin Vice President, a Karen Prime Minister, and, of 32 other Ministers and Deputy Ministers, eight women and 17 non-Burman), and it has made several calls and a new policy for greater inclusion of Rohingya people. Since 1 Feb 2021, ALTSEAN has logged over 300 CRPH/ NUG measures, including nine legal amendments and 34 changes from prior military or NLD policies.

The NUG sold *Spring Revolution bonds*, and established a *Spring Revolution lottery* that ruined the junta-run existing lottery.¹⁰⁶ On 20 Sep, the CRPH adopted the Union Tax Law of 2021, with a projected revenue of MMK 1.44 trillion.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, these bodies cut junta revenue by declaring all junta-issued investment permits illegal and invalid, warning oil and gas businesses that the civilian government would demand anew any taxes and dividends paid to the junta, amending the Public Debt law to prevent junta borrowing, and listing military-owned conglomerates as terrorist operations.¹⁰⁸

The NUG condemned public and private employers for firing, harassing, removing from employee housing, or otherwise harming employees participating in the CDM. According to ALTSEAN documentation, NUG bodies blacklisted 1,536 civil servants supporting the junta who had targeted CDM members. Meanwhile, it created parallel systems, such as for education, for which it established a 2021–2022 interim program.¹⁰⁹

On 7 Sep, the NUG acknowledged a *people's resistance war* against the junta.¹¹⁰ It had already established PDFs, the forerunner to federal armed forces, and issued a PDF Code of Conduct and PDF and guidelines.¹¹¹ The NUG also set out lengthy defense policies,¹¹² as well as simplified guidance on compliance with the rules of war. It established guidelines for integrating junta troops who defect,¹¹³ and established the People's Embrace group for junta defectors; over 2,000 junta troops and 6,000 police had defected through the group by October.¹¹⁴

Notable CRPH/NUG actions

- Creation of CRPH-CDM Support Team, with township-level bodies to coordinate and deal with arising needs (16 Feb 2021); CRPH donation of MMK 25.8 million to CDM as of 6 Mar
- Declaration that SAC is a terrorist group (1 Mar)
- Establishment of the NUG (16 Apr)
- Abolition of 2008 Constitution (31 Mar)
- Establishment a Federal Democracy Charter, a road map for a federal union (31 Mar)
- Formation of Commission to draft the Federal Constitution (20 May)
- Formation of National Commission on COVID-19 Prevention, Control, and Treatment (8 Jul)
- National Health Conference attended by NUG and 138 Ethnic Health Organization representatives; National Health Committee established (2–5 Aug)
- Ratification of the Rome Statute of the ICC and declaration that jurisdiction extends from 1 Jul 2002 (20 Aug); and withdrawal of objections to ICJ jurisdiction (1 Feb 2022)
- Declaration of people's resistance war (7 Sep)

¹⁰⁵ For background, see [ALTSEAN-Burma \(31 Mar 2021\) Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw: Burma/Myanmar's legitimate government until parliament resumes](#).

¹⁰⁶ NUG (27 Oct 2021) Ministry of Planning, Finance and Investment Statement 12/2021 announcing to the people that there will be Spring Revolution special bonds; CRPH (6 Aug 2021) Approval of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Investment's draft proposal of the gambling law; Irrawaddy (19 Aug 2021) Lottery-Mad Myanmar Public Turns Back on State Sweepstakes Under Junta

¹⁰⁷ CRPH (20 Sep 2021) Adoption of the Union Tax Law of 2021 by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw; NUG (3 Oct 2021) Ministry of Planning, Finance and Investment Press release

¹⁰⁸ CRPH (13 Mar 2021) Announcement 1/2021; CRPH (16 Mar 2021) Last notice to oil and gas companies; CRPH (14 Jun 2021) Third Amendment to the Public Debt Management Law; NUG (10 Nov 2021) Ministry of Commerce, Statement 2/2021 on Terrorist Economic Operations

¹⁰⁹ NUG (16 Jun 2021) Ministry of Education Statement 20/2021 on Interim Education Program

¹¹⁰ NUG (7 Sep 2021) Statement 1/2021 Declaration of emergency situation; NUG (7 Sep 2021) Acting President Duwa Lashi La delivers a speech to the people

¹¹¹ NUG (5 May 2021) Notification 1/2021: Announcement on the Establishment of People's Defence Force; NUG (17 May 2021) Ministry of Defense Announcement 1/2021; NUG (26 May 2021) Ministry of Defense PDF Military Code of Conduct; NUG (23 May 2021) Ministry of Defense announcement about PDF

¹¹² NUG (7 May 2021) NUG Ministry of Defense: Basic Principles of Defense

¹¹³ NUG (23 Aug 2021) (Interim) President Statement 8/2021, Policy on Tatmadaw soldiers and police

¹¹⁴ Irrawaddy (15 Oct 2021) Hundreds of Myanmar Junta Soldiers and Police Plan to Defect Since People's War Declaration: NUG