

# *The Challenge Of Nationalism And Hatred*



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**Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica**

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## Preface

**T**hroughout history, ultranationalists, religious extremists, and Myanmar military have incited the public that their religion (Buddhism) and ethnicity (Burmese) are under attack from other faiths and ethnic groups as propaganda. As a result, hostility and conflicts among the people grew even more intense. Despite the fact that those three groups have discriminated against the existence of other ethnic groups by promoting the two identities, Buddhist and Burmese, the perpetrators have not been effectively punished till now.

Hence, this paper by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica mainly discusses the rise of ultranationalist and religious extremist groups, their movements, propaganda campaigns, and subsequent riots. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica seeks to foster a society free from hatred based on ethnic identity, religion, and extreme ideologies in the post-revolutionary period. Furthermore, it is written with the purpose of making people aware of the risks of nationalist movements and hatred as well as creating a path of transitional justice for ethnic groups whose existence has been threatened and destroyed.

# *The Challenge Of Nationalism And Hatred*

**T**hroughout the history of Burma, there has been propaganda calling to protect ethnicity and religion, resulting in violent riots that have stemmed from fear and hatred based on ethnicity/religion. Each and every military regime had and have spread such propaganda. Due to hate speech and lack of effective intervention to avoid conflict, hatred amongst different communities has grown.

Buddhism and Burmese people are considered the greatest in Burma, and other religions and ethnicities have encountered and are still facing discrimination, hate speech, and violent suppression. Additionally, the Burmese army depicts itself as the defender of Buddhism, the Burmese, and the country. Also, factions portrayed as nationalists have long supported the Burmese army. There have been indications that the Burmese army and certain political parties provided support to these 'nationalists,' which soon developed into extremist nationalism. After 2010, these extremist nationalism movements gained momentum and popularity amongst the general public. Hate speech and propaganda spread to the general public resulting in violence. Pro-military lobbies, ultranationalists, and religious groups are still prominent and active in today's political landscape.

This paper seeks to examine the actions and objectives of the ultranationalists. The origins of extremist nationalism and how ultranationalists and religious groups utilize propaganda to instigate hatred and cause violent conflicts and riots will be discussed. Moreover, the intentions of ultranationalists and religious groups since the 2021 military coup will be explored. This paper aims to understand extremist nationalism and religious groups, as well as the threats these factions pose in rebuilding a peaceful, harmonious community during Spring Revolution and the post-revolution period.

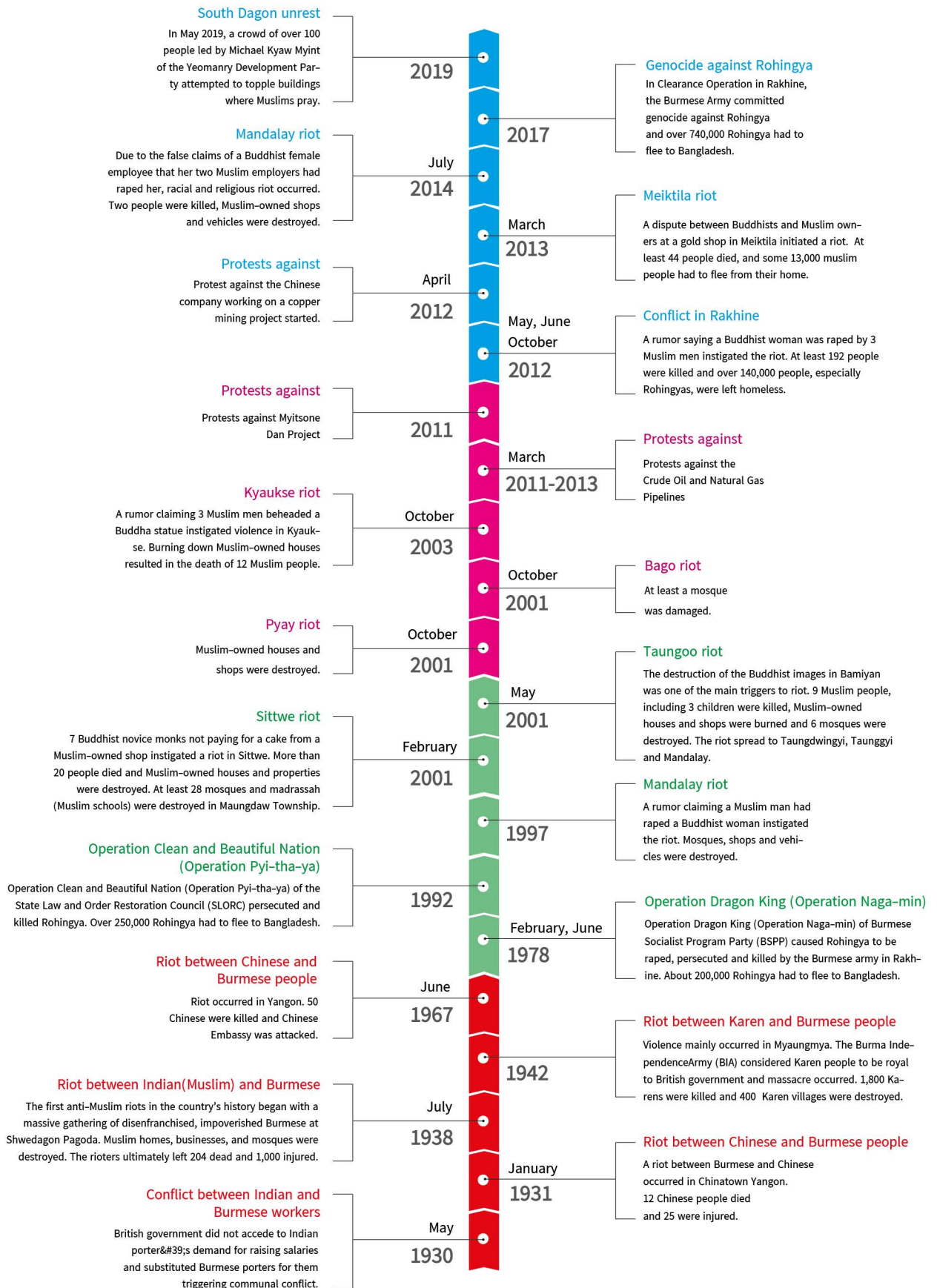


## 1 | Background

Under each military regime in Burma, there were many violent conflicts based on ethnicity and religion. Violent conflicts between the Burmese people and non-Burmese people and suppression of minorities can be found throughout history. However, in particular, there were many violent oppressions that targeted Muslim people. The 1978 Operation Naga-min (Operation Dragon King) of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the 1992 Operation Pyi-tha-ya (Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation) of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) persecuted and killed many Rohingyas in Rakhine. After Operation Naga-min, the BSPP government agreed to accept the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees, according to the Hinthar Operation. Similarly, after Operation Pyi-tha-ya, Rohingya refugees were repatriated. However, discrimination and oppression persisted.

In 1998, General Khin Nyunt, a top military official, commented, 'These people are not originally from Myanmar but have illegally migrated to Myanmar. They are racially, ethnically, culturally different from the other national races in our country.' (*Driving Out "Foreigners" – Burma's Path to Genocide United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.*)

# Infamous Racial/Religious Riots and Communal Violence in Myanmar



## The Challenge of Nationalism and Hatred

### 1.1 Roots of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts: 969 Movement

After the military had violently cracked down on the 1988 uprising, the Sangha (Buddhist monks) boycotted the donations from the Burmese military and their families. Then to restore their reputation, many footages of military generals observing the repairs of Buddhist religious buildings and donating to the Sangha regularly appeared in state media. In 1991, the Burmese army created the Department for the Promotion and Propagation of Sasana. In 2000, the aforementioned department published a book named 'A Good Buddhist.' The book displayed an early version of the 969 emblem. (ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL, 2013) The 969 emblem represents the 9 attributes of the Buddha, 6 attributes of the Dhamma (his teachings) and the 9 attributes of the Sangha (the monastic community), aiming to counter the 786 number, the numerological summation of the Arabic alphabets in the opening phrase of the Holy Qu'ran. 969

movement believes that Muslim people are plotting to conquer Burma (*Islam in Myanmar, 2020*).

The 2001 Taliban destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, and the 9/11 Al Qaeda attacks in the United States of America instigated islamophobia all over the world, and it further inflamed the fear and hatred against the Muslim people in Burma. In 2001, when anti-Muslim sentiments were high due to the destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, Buddhist monks circulated a book named 'A-myo-pyauk-hmar-soe-kyauk-sayar' (The Fear of Losing One Race) nationwide. The book contained illogical writings aimed to instill anti-Muslim sentiments and propaganda and was rumored to have been thought up by the Directorate of Defense Service Intelligence. According to Burmese Muslim leaders, distribution of pamphlets in 2001 was also supported by the Union of Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a military-sponsored mass organization (HRW, 2002). The



969 emblem and exhortation of 969 movement (Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)

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◆ ကြောက်စရာအကောင်းဆုံး အန္တရာယ်	၄
◆ ၇၈၆ ကိုရှောင်စေလို	၈
◆ အစ္စလာမ်လာသာသမိုင်းအကျဉ်း	၈
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◆ ရှင်ရဟန်းမှာပြုပြင်ပါ	၁၃
◆ အီရန်နိုင်ငံနှင့် အစ္စလာမ်ဘာသာ	၁၃
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◆ နိဂုံး	၂၉
◆ မူဆလင်များ၏ လျှို့ဝှက်ဖြန့်ဝေချက်	၃၂

Content of a book named 'A-myo-pyauk-hmar-soe-kyauk-sayar' distributed in 2001

distribution of such hate speech resulted in violent conflicts in Sittwe, Taungoo, Pyay, and Bago and spread to other cities in 2001.

During these conflicts, U Wirathu, the infamous ultranationalist, and extreme religious figure, started giving sermons claiming threats of the Muslim people. He was sentenced to 25 years in jail for instigating a communal riot in his hometown, Kyaukse. (*International Crisis Group, 2017*). U Wirathu's sentence was pardoned by

the U Thein Sein led government in January 2012 and he became more active in the 969 movement. (*SCHROEDER, n.d.*) Stickers, pamphlets, and CDs reminding to stay loyal to race and religion, to not shop at Muslim-owned shops, to only support Buddhist-owned shops, and for Burmese women to not wed people were distributed all over the country. These movements had instigated racial and religious conflicts in Burma.



## 2

## Racial and Religious Riots during State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Regime

### 2.1 Mandalay Riot (1997)

In 1997, a breaking-and-entering crime was committed to the stomach portion of the Mahamuni Image in Mandalay in search of the sacred ruby. Senior monks sought to investigate. The Burmese army was rumored to have done that crime. While the senior monks convened to discuss the rumor, a monk and a person entered the meeting room unexpectedly and informed them that a Muslim man had raped a Buddhist woman. (*Fink, 2009*)

The news resulted in a crowd of 1,000–1,500 monks, and people gathered chanting their

anti-Muslim slogans. The crowd targeted mosques at first. An eyewitness claimed that the Muslim-owned businesses, shops, and vehicles parked near mosques were burned, destroyed, and taken later. (*Nickey Diamond, 2015*)

At least, 3 people died, and 18 Mosques were destroyed. (*MAR, n.d*) Prior to the 1997 Mandalay riot “leaflets were apparently circulating earlier, urging Buddhists to boycott Muslim stores and not to marry Muslims”. (*International Crisis Group, 2013*) That riot in Mandalay subsequently spread to other cities, Yangon, Bago, Pyay, and Taungoo. (*MAR, n.d.*)

At the same time, the crime committed at the Mahamuni Buddha Temple was forgotten and nobody was talking about the sacred ruby anymore. The spark that instigated the Mandalay riot, the claim that a Muslim man raped a Buddhist woman, was later proved to be a rumor. (*Fink, 2009*)

"An English-language Thai newspaper, The Nation, carried a picture showing monks attacking a mosque while security looked on, seemingly doing nothing to stop the destruction". (*International Crisis Group, 2013*) Some records claimed that there were walkie-talkies under the robes of the monks, or that some monks appeared with newly shaven heads. In other words, while the majority of the instigators were monks, soldiers disguised as monks were also among the crowd. (*Fink, 2009*) Therefore, many speculated that the military distributed false news in order to distract the public from the news of the crime at the Mahamuni.

## 2.2 Sittwe Riot (February 2001)

In February 2001, 7 Buddhist novice not paying for a cake from a Muslim-owned shop instigated a riot in Sittwe. Local Burmese monks instructed local Buddhists to gather in the streets and protect them. The leader of the closest mosque also instructed via a speaker for local Muslims to protect themselves, women, and their children. More than 20 people died during this riot, and over 30 houses and a Muslim-owned guesthouse were burned

down. The riot centered in a place with a prominent Muslim population and hence, mainly resulting in the destruction of Muslim-owned properties.

At the beginning, the security forces did not intervene in the riot but stood and watched for several hours. Only when the Muslim people attacked police disguised as monks, the police fired straight up into the air. When that did not disperse the crowd, the police started shooting into the Muslim crowd. The army arrived at 2 am containing the riot.

Sittwe was placed under a curfew for 2 months after the riot. Muslim people from Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships were not allowed to come to Sittwe. "There was also violence in and around Maungdaw township in Arakan, with eyewitness accounts suggesting that at least 28 mosques and madrassah (Muslim schools) were destroyed in May 2001. As of May 2002, few Muslims were allowed to travel freely out of northern Arakan". (*HRW, 2002*)

## 2.3 Taungoo Riot (May 2001)

There was mounting tension between the Buddhist and Muslim communities in Taungoo in May 2001. The destruction of the Buddhist images in Bamiyan seemed to have been one of the main triggers. Buddhist monks demanded the destruction of the ancient Hantha Mosque in Taungoo in retaliation for the destruction in Bamiyan.

On 15 May 2001, a crowd of monks and locals, estimating to be over a thousand, led the anti-Muslim violence that killed 9 Muslim people, including 3 children. Muslim-owned houses and shops were burned. Han Thar Mosque, a 200-year-old religious building, and 5 other mosques were destroyed. The Taungoo riot spread to Myo Hla, Kywebwe, and surrounding towns and villages.

Muslim-owned vehicles, houses, shops, and properties were also destroyed in Taungdwingyi. The riot also spread to Taunggyi. In Mandalay and Pyay, attempts were made to ruin mosques but Buddhist monks seemed to have taken an active role in protecting the local mosques from destruction. (*HRW, 2002*)

#### 2.4 Pyay Riot (October 2001)

In early October 2001, a violent conflict against Muslim people occurred in Pyay. The clash was sparked off when a young Burmese girl who eloped with a Muslim boy was forced to convert to Islam. The girl's parents protested the boy's parents at the local Mosque. 200 Buddhist monks attending a religious ceremony, which General Khin Nyunt would also attend, led a crowd of over a thousand people and destroyed Muslim-owned houses and shops.

A Burmese Muslim leader said that "the Burmese army resolved the violence but only after about 40 Muslim-owned shops were destroyed. Two hours after the security forces

left, violence erupted again." (*HRW, 2002*)

#### 2.5 Bago Riot (October 2001)

The riot erupted after a quarrel broke out between some monks and a Muslim drugstore owner in October 2001. While the Bago riot was not as violent as the Pyay riot, at least one mosque was damaged. The riot resulted in a curfew, travel restrictions, as well as police and soldiers targeting and closely monitoring the Muslim community. (*HRW, 2002*)

#### 2.6 Kyaukse Riot (October 2003)

A rumor claiming 3 Muslim men beheaded a Buddha statue instigated violence in Kyaukse on 19 October 2003. Burning down Muslim-owned houses resulted in the death of 12 Muslim people, including a pregnant woman and a young child. (*RFA, 2003*) (*Kyaw Zwa Moe, 2003*)

The riot spread to cities such as Yangon and Mandalay. In Pakkoku, Muslim people were targeted and attacked. Muslim-owned houses, shops, and vehicles were destroyed. "Many Buddhists believe that the whole drama is being orchestrated by the regime. Although the military pretends to protect Muslims, such riots could never take place in major cities without the Military Intelligence's prior knowledge," said a political activist in Yangon to The Irrawaddy in 2003. (*THE IRRAWADDY, 2003*)



### 3 Racial and Religious Incitements and Riots during U Thein Sein led Government

#### 3.1 Chinese Projects and Anti-China Sentiments

During the U Thein Sein led government, there were protests on Chinese projects in Burma. In 2012, a song called ‘The Death of Mandalay’ was released. The song targeted the Chinese people in Mandalay.

In March 2011, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), a Chinese state-owned company, began construction for the Myanmar-China Crude Oil Pipeline and Natural Gas Pipeline, which would cross below the riverbed of the Irrawaddy River. (RFA, 2020) The crude oil and natural gas pipelines would pass through Rakhine, Mandalay, Magwe, and Shan, and it was planned to start sending them to China in June 2013. (RFA, 2011) (RFA, 2011) A human rights and environmental monitoring group, Earth Rights International (ERI), released a report on 29 March 2011 and urged to stop the project as serious human rights violations, including land grabs, could occur in the project

area. (RFA, 2011) In September and December 2011, Shwe Natural Gas Movement released a report and notices demanding the end of the crude oil and natural gas pipelines and shaming the Norwegian government for being involved with the project. (RFA, 2011) (RFA, 2011)

On 1 March 2012, there were protests demanding the end of the pipeline in Kyauk Phyu, Yangon in Burma, and Bangkok, Thailand. Open letters were sent to the person in charge of the Chinese Embassy in Chiang Mai. (RFA, 2012) Rakhine Nationalities Development Party also led protests and public assemblies regarding the project. (RFA, 2011) (RFA, 2011)

However, unlike the Myitsone Dam Project, the Crude Oil and Natural Gas Pipelines were unable to unite the public interest. When nationwide protests erupted demanding the end of the Myitsone Dam Project, the U Thein Sein led government announced that the Myitsone Dam Project would be suspended during their tenure. However, on the other hand, despite the ongoing

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protests and land issues regarding the Crude Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline Project, the Rakhine Riot in May 2012 and the Meiktila Riot in March 2013 distracted the public attention from the project. In August 2013, the Crude Oil and Natural Gas Pipelines became operational and started to deliver natural gas to China. (RFA, 2013)

In April 2012, the entire village of Se Te, located in Salingyi Township, Monywa District, protested against the Chinese company working on a copper mining project. (RFA, 2012) When the 2012 Rakhine Riot occurred, public attention to the copper mining project dropped. However, in November 2012, protests on the copper mining project flared up again. On 23 November, security forces cracked down on protestors, including the local population and Buddhist monks by using incendiary phosphorus shells and water cannons. (RFA, 2012) However, the Copper Mine Project persevered.

### 3.2 Conflicts between Buddhist and Muslim Communities

#### 3.2.1 Rakhine Riot (2012)

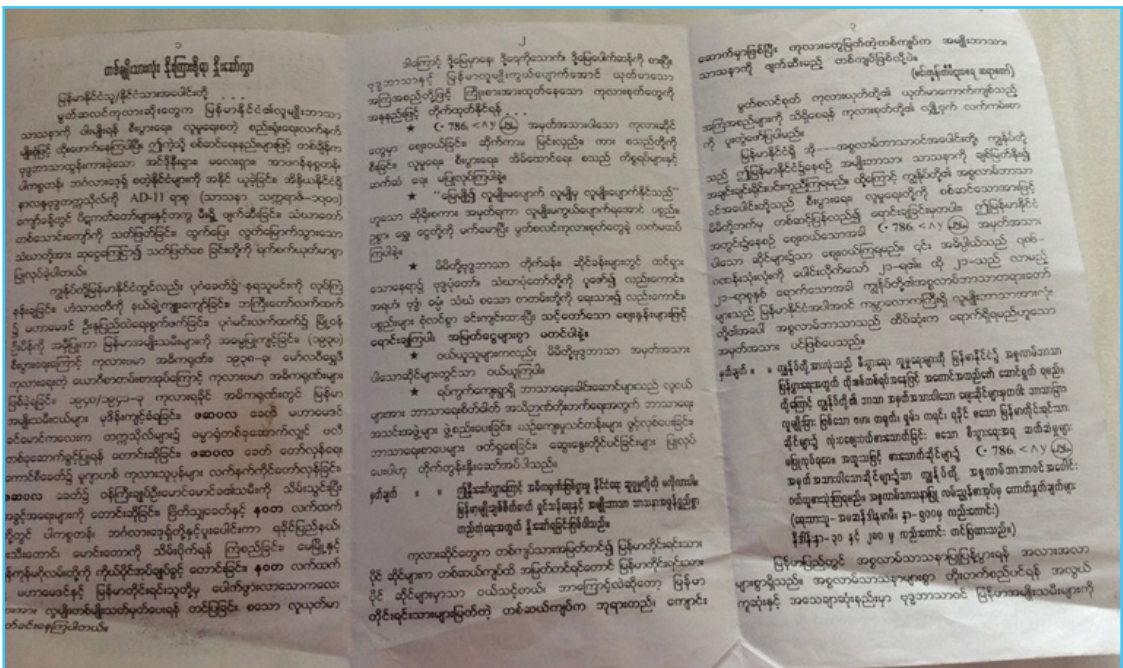
In May 2012, a rumor saying a Buddhist woman was raped by 3 Muslim men circulated, and in retaliation, 10 Muslim men were killed on a bus in Rakhine by Buddhist people in June. Then racial and religious conflicts followed. (SCHROEDER, n.d.) In June, violence occurred in 4 townships in Rakhine and grew to 9 townships by October. (HRW, 2013) Rohingya



*Burning houses during Sittwe riot  
(Source – Reuters, 2012)*

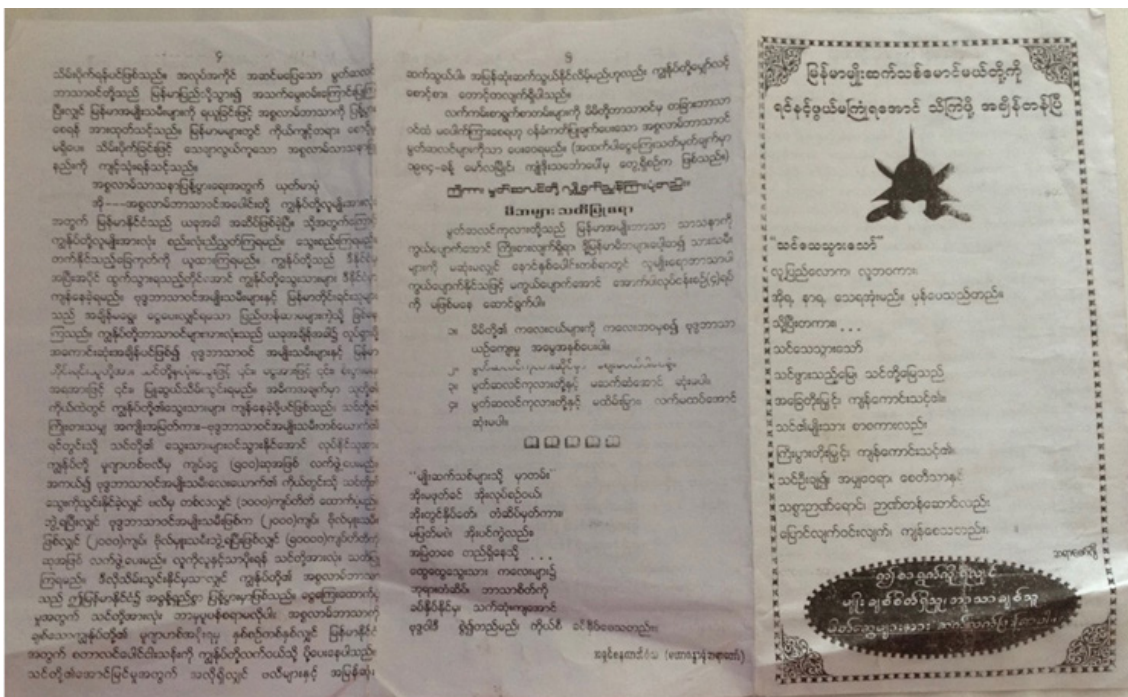
and Kamein Muslims were targeted, many were slaughtered, and houses and buildings were destroyed. At least 192 people were killed, and over 140,000 people, especially Rohingyas, were left homeless. (ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL, 2013)

The followers of U Vimala, a leading Buddhist monk of the 969 movement, said that they had removed photos of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's from their homes to protest her apparent reluctance to speak up for Buddhists affected by violence in Rakhine. The Burmese Muslim Association accused party members of the National League of Democracy (NLD) of handing out 969 materials in Yangon. U Nyan Win, the spokesman of NLD, said that "some party members were involved in the 969 movement, but the NLD cannot intervene with the freedom or rights of members." (ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL, 2013)



Leaflet being distributed in Karen State, Hpa-an Town October 2012

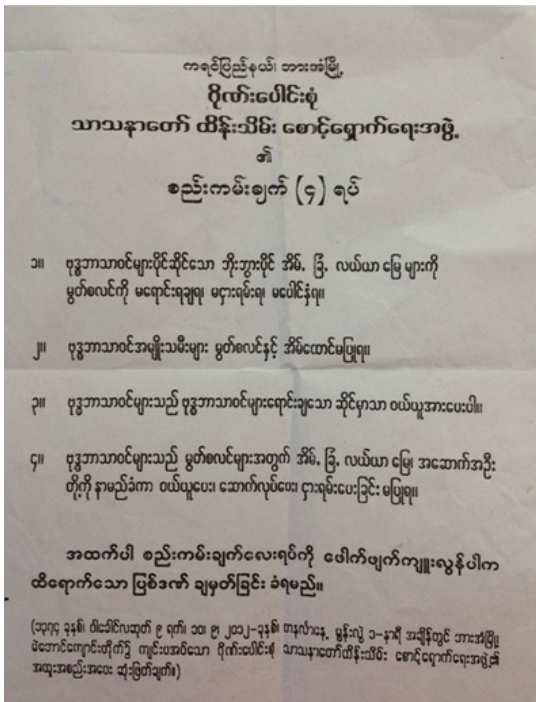
(Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)



Leaflet being distributed in Karen State, Hpa-an Town October 2012

(Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)

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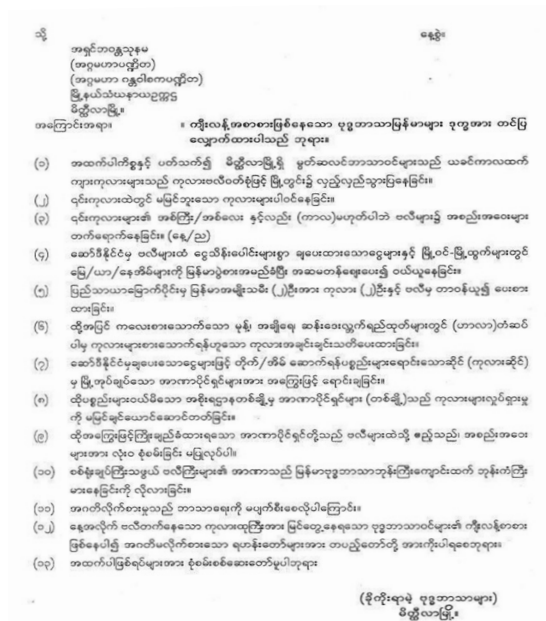


Leaflet being distributed in Karen State, Hpa-an Town October 2012 (Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)

### 3.2.2 Meiktila Riot (2013)

In March 2013, a dispute between Buddhists and Muslim owners of a gold shop in Meiktila initiated a riot. Local Muslim districts were destroyed, and many students and teachers from a madrasa were killed. At least 44 people died, and some 13,000 muslim people had to flee from their home and businesses. The response from the security forces was clearly not enough. Eyewitnesses claim that police stood and watched while people were getting killed. (*International Crisis Group, 2013*) (*BBC, 2013*) (*ရှေ့ဆင်ခြင်, 2013*)

After the riot in Meiktila, violence continued in other townships. Minhla, Tharrawaddy,



Letter distributed in and around Meiktila shortly before the violence (Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)



A burning mosque during riot in Meiktila (Source – PressReader, 2013)



*Burning buildings during riot in Meiktila (Source – AUSTRALIA NETWORK NEWS, 2013)*

Letpadan, Sitkwin, Okpho, Oebokone, and Monyo townships of Tharrawaddy District, Bago, were put under martial law due to riots. (RFA, 2013) In April, Okekan, situated in the north of Yangon, a riot killed one person and injured many. Muslim-owned shops and houses were robbed and destroyed. A mosque was burned down. On 2 May, Muslim-owned shops and houses were destroyed in Hpakant, Kachin. In May, violence in Lashio killed one person, and many Muslim-owned shops and houses were robbed and destroyed. Parts of the main mosque and a nearby madrasa for orphans were burned down. Hundreds of Muslim people had to flee and seek refuge in a Shan Buddhist monastery for weeks. In June, a riot in Thandwe destroyed 14 houses, and the town was put under martial law. On 24 August, an anti-Muslim riot occurred in a village in Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region. (International Crisis Group,

2013). Violences transpired in Okethekone, Tatkon, Yamethin, and Okekan, resulting in the destruction of mosques, homes, and shops. (SCHROEDER, n.d.)



*Burning houses in Mingalar Zayone Ward in Meiktila during riot and security forces (Source – RFA, 2013)*

### 3.2.3 Mandalay Riot (2014)

Due to the false claims of a Buddhist female employee that her two Muslim employers had raped her, racial and religious riot occurred. Two people were killed, Muslim-owned shops and vehicles were destroyed, and martial law was declared. (RFA, 2014) (RFA, 2014) (RFA, 2014)

### 3.3 Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha)

After the riots in Rakhine and Meiktila, the Patriotic Association of Myanmar was established in mid-2013. In February 2014, the Patriotic Association of Myanmar proposed four 'Race and Religion Protection' draft laws, namely the Religious Conversion Bill, the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill, the Population Control Healthcare Bill, and the Monogamy Bill to the President of Myanmar. (RFA, 2014) In October 2015, Sitagu Sayadaw gave remarks at the

pro-Race and Religion Protection Laws rally at Thuwanna Stadium in Yangon. (RFA, 2015)

Opposition politicians and architects were protesting to terminate 5 construction projects by the Marga Group with worries that they might cause damage to the Shwedagon Pagoda. MaBaTha later joined the protest and threatened that they would protest alongside people nationwide if the projects did not cease operation. In June 2015, President U Thein Sein issued an order to terminate these projects. (လွှဲဝေ, 2015)

Buddhist monks involved with the 969 movement initially commented that the movement was to protect race and religion and not for partisan politics. (Htet Min Lwin, n.d.) In October 2015, Dr. Ashin Dhammapiya, the spokesperson of MaBaTha (Central), commented that the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (Central) would push on with their main agenda of patriotism and would not get involved in politics



*Sitagu Sayadaw at Pro-Race and Religion Protection Laws rally at Thuwanna Stadium in Yangon (Source – The irrawaddy, 2015)*



*Pro-Race and Religion Protection Laws rally at Thuwanna Stadium in Yangon (Source – BBC, 2015)*

nor campaign for the 2015 election. He further explained that campaigning for the Union Solidarity and Development Party and distributing pamphlets in Tanintharyi and Ayeyarwaddy not to vote for NLD but to vote for USDP were personal preferences of MaBaTha members (မြင့်မြင့်နိုင်, 2015).

However, campaigns related to race and religion occurred in the 2015 election. While MaBaTha officially declared that the organization was not backed by any political organization, in June 2015, Sayadaw Ven. Vimalabodhi, the Secretary General of MaBaTha, commented that he would prefer another term for the U Thein Sein led government and that when MaBaTha member monks return to their hometowns, they should instruct the local population whom to vote for. Furthermore, he said, 'the sins of the past military regime should be forgotten, and people should focus on the good deeds of the current government. If any

Hluttaw representative objects MaBaTha's propositions, their names should be recorded, and MaBaTha should object to that representative.' (လဝီဝေ, 2015)

The closer it was to the 2015 elections, MaBaTha actively investigated if the candidates in Mandalay were protectors of race and religion. On 16 September, Sayadaw U Wirathu, the prominent MaBaTha leader, remarked to choose those who would protect race and religion. MaBaTha also announced that they would release the candidates who opposed the Race and Religion Protection Laws. Author Maung Thway Chun, a staunch MaBaTha supporter, said that *'if NLD wins, they would stand for Bengalis. If she (Aung San Suu Kyi) won, she would let the Bengalis be citizens. Or if they abolish the Burma Citizenship Act of 1982, there would be no guarantees for Buddhism and Rakhine State.'* (ထက်နိုင်ဇော်, 2015)



## 4

## Nationalist Movements under NLD led Government

### 4.1 Tensions between NLD led Government and MaBaTha

During the NLD led government, there were tensions between the government and nationalist activists, particularly with the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha). In 2016, Yangon Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein remarked twice that MaBaTha was no longer needed. On 7 July, MaBaTha announced that "by 14 July 2016, the government should take responsibility for the issue of Yangon Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein's hateful remarks against the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha) who are defending the race and religion of Burmese people and conspiracy to

undermine the organization." (ဟိန်းကိုစိုး, 2016) In May 2017, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (MaHaNa) ordered that individuals or groups were forbidden to act under the name of the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha) and signs of the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha) to be removed. Any nonconforming Buddhist monk would be subject to No. 20/90 Law relating to the Sangha Organization, and any nonconforming individual would face charges in accordance with the law. (RFA, 2017)

After the order, MaBaTha changed its name to Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation. On 25 June, ultranationalist Buddhist monks and



*Major General Thet Pon, the chief of Yangon Command, together with U Tilawka, president of Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation (Source – Myanmar Now, 2019)*

people protested, dismissing Thura U Aung Ko, the Minister of Religious Affairs and Culture, and allowing U Wirathu to preach. On 3 July 2017, Thura U Aung Ko commented that "Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation is just the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (MaBaTha) in disguise, trying to slip away from the orders of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (*MaHaNa*). As such, the organization will face charges in accordance with the law." (*PTO, 2017*) On 11 July, the Mandalay Ma Ba Tha group announced they would not take down the MaBaTha signs. (*THE IRRAWADDY, 2017*) On 12 August 2018, U Thein Aung, the President of the Dhamma Vamsanurakkhita Association of Myanmar, commented that the MaBaTha transformed Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation would never be disbanded. (ဇော်ဇော်လှ, 2018) Thura U Aung Ko announced on 31 August that the MaBaTha transformed Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation was an illegal association. (ဇော်ဇော်, 2018)

On 16 June 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture released a statement that only the Buddhist monks who conform to the 227 precepts and have been in monkhood for over 20 years should be entitled to 'Sayadaw' and those who openly defy the precepts should never be entitled as 'Sayadaw.' In June 2019, the annual assembly of the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation released a statement that said the aforementioned statement did not conform with the Dhamma Vinaya and was misleading Buddhist believers and, therefore, strongly condemned the statement. (*Nanda & NAC, 2019*)

The annual assembly was attended by Major General Thet Pon, the chief of Yangon Command, and he donated 30 million MMK. The lunch for 1,000 Buddhist monks who attended the assembly was sponsored by U Soe Tun Shein, a businessman issued a warrant for tax evasion. The Ministry of Religious Affairs indirectly



*10 Rohingya men whose hands were tied and who were made go down on knees by military in Inn Din village (Source – Arab News, 2017)*

condemned the army's donation. On 27 June, the Ministry released a statement saying 'the people believe that donating 30 million MMK to an organization deemed illegal by the State Sangha Maha Nayaka is an act that defies the decision of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka.' (*Myanmar Now*, 2019)

#### 4.2 Rohingya Genocide (2017)

In October 2016, due to an attack on a police outpost by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, the Burmese army conducted clearance operations and committed crimes against humanity and genocide. Villages were burned down, Rohingya people were slaughtered, and Rohingya women were raped. The event caused over 800,000 Rohingya people to flee their

homeland. (*Documentation of Atrocities in Northern Rakhine State*, 2003) The Gambia filed a suit against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice, and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi appeared in court. The majority of the Myanmar people denied genocide and stood with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who protected the atrocities of the Burmese army. However, the people's views and standings were swayed after the coup.

#### 4.3 Unrest in South Dagon (2019)

In May 2019, a crowd of over 100 people led by Michael Kyaw Myint of the Yeomanry Development Party attempted to topple buildings where Muslims pray. (*Myanmar Now*, 2019)

#### 4.4 Ultrationalist Movements Before and After the 2020 Elections

##### 4.4.1 Ultrationalist Movements prior to the 2020 Elections

စဉ်	တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူးကြီး မင်းအောင်လှိုင်နှင့် တွေ့ဆုံခဲ့သည့် နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီများ		
၁	ပြည်ထောင်စုကြံ့ခိုင်ရေးနှင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးသန်းဌေး
၂	တိုင်းရင်းသားစည်းလုံးညီညွတ်ရေးပါတီ	အတွင်းရေးမှူး	ဦးပုဂံထွေး
၃	အမျိုးသား ဒီမိုကရေစီပါတီသစ်	တွဲဖက်အတွင်းရေးမှူး	ဦးနေဝင်း
၄	အမျိုးသားတိုးတက်ရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးသိန်းညွန့်
၅	ခေတ်သစ်ပြည်သူပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဒေါက်တာ နေဇင်လတ်
၆	အမျိုးသားဒီမိုကရေစီ အင်အားစုပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးထွန်းအောင်ကျော်
၇	ပြည်သူ့ရှေ့ဆောင်ပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးခင်မောင်ဆွေ
၈	အမျိုးသားနိုင်ငံရေးမဟာမိတ်များအဖွဲ့ချုပ်	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဒေါက်တာ ဒေါ်သက်သက်ခိုင်
၉	အင်းအမျိုးသားဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးသိမ်းကြည်
၁၀	ဒီမိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ(မြန်မာ)	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးဝင်းမြင့်
၁၁	လီဆူအမျိုးသားဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးပါတီ(ဒူးလေးပါတီ)	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးတင်ဆွေ
၁၂	ကရင်အမျိုးသားဒီမိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးရွှေမင်း(ခ)ဆီဖာလာလူ
၁၃	ကယားပြည်နယ်ဒီမိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးစောထွန်းကြည်
၁၄	ဝံသာနဒီမိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးဖိုးရယ်
၁၅	" ဝ " အမျိုးသားပါတီ	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဒေါ်နန်းရွှေကြာ
၁၆	ပအိုဝ်းအမျိုးသားအဖွဲ့ချုပ် (PNO) ပါတီ	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးရန်ကျော်
၁၇	ဒီမိုကရေစီနှင့်ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးပါတီ	ယာယီ ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးခွန်မောင်သောင်း
၁၈	မြီတိုင်းရင်းသားဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးပါတီ	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးမျိုးညွန့်
၁၉	ရခိုင်ပြည်နယ်အမျိုးသားအင်အားစုပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးကျော်ထွန်းခိုင်
၂၀	ခေတ်သစ်ပြည်ထောင်စုပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးအေးကြိုင်
၂၁	ဗမာပြည်သူပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးအောင်သန်း
၂၂	မတူကွဲပြားခြင်းနှင့် ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးအောင်သန်းတင်
၂၃	ကိုးကန့်ဒီမိုကရေစီနှင့် ညီညွတ်ရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဒေါ်စန္ဒာဦး
၂၄	မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတောင်သူလယ်သမား၊ အလုပ်သမားပြည်သူပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးထွန်းနိုင်
၂၅	၈၈ မျိုးဆက်ဒီမိုကရေစီပါတီ	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးအောင်မျိုးခိုင်
၂၆	လူထုပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးသောင်းဦး
၂၇	မြန်မာပြည်သူ့ဒီမိုကရက်တစ်ပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးပီစီပြည်ဟိန်း(ခ)ဦးမျိုးမင်းထွန်း
၂၈	ပြည်သူ့အလုပ်သမားပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးဌေးကျော်
၂၉	ပြည်သူ့အကျိုးပြု ကျောင်းသားများပါတီ	ဒုတိယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးကျော်ဇင်
၃၀	ပြည်သူ့အင်အားပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဒေါ်ခင်စန်းမူ
၃၁	ပြည်ထောင်စုလယ်သမား၊ အလုပ်သမား အင်အားစုပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးဌေးအောင်
၃၂	အမျိုးသားတိုးတက်မြင့်မားရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးမင်းသူ
၃၃	မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတောင်သူလယ်သမား ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးပါတီ	ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ	ဦးကျော်စိန်
၃၄	အခြေခံလူတန်းစားဘဝမြှင့်တင်ရေးပါတီ	အထွေထွေအတွင်းရေးမှူး	ဦးကျော်မြင့်(ခ)ပိုက်ကယ်ကျော်မြင့်

*Political parties that met with Commander-in-chief in August 2020*

*(Source – Myanmar Now, 2020)*

In August, prior to the 2020 election, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the Commander-in-chief of the Burmese Army, met with 34 political parties. (LNL & PTO, 2020) Some campaigns for the 2020 General Elections were based on race and religion. When Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) campaigned in Natogyi Township of Myingyan District, Mandalay, the lyrics of a song played at the

rally included insults saying Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the 'Englishman's slave wife' and that the NLD party is 'the destroyer of the Sasana.' NLD filed a lawsuit for that action. (LNL & MM, 2020)

When campaigning in Zeyathiri Township, Naypyidaw, USDP Chairperson U Than Htay claimed that his family was free of mixed blood.

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He said, *'My wife and my children, are they ruthless businessmen? Did they exploit opportunities? What blood are they? Are they mixed with Kalar? Or the Chinese? Or any other foreign blood?'* (LNL & MM, 2020)

U Maung Myint, a USDP candidate campaigning at the Ouyinma Village of Minkin Township, remarked, *'You should know that party (USDP) only had 3 candidates (Muslim) in 2010. Now in 2020, they (NLD) had 42 or 62 candidates. How did that happen? Take Sithu Maung, the candidate from Pabedan Township, for instance. He's Kalar Lay (Muslim). They have submitted 42 such candidates. Ladies and gentlemen, which party would you stand with?'* (KM, 2020)

On 22 October, USDP rallies in Mingin Township chanted, 'Vote USDP to preserve our Sasana! Vote USDP to preserve our Sasana!' The song 'The roar of the lion' played at the rally included lyrics such as *'We won't let our race and religion be lost. Only when USDP wins the undoers of the race can be banished. We vote for the solidarity of the Union. We vote for the USDP to preserve our Sasana.'* (KM, 2020)

In 2019, U Wirathu preached that *'Soldiers who live on a soldier's pay and defend the country, facing the hatred of the people deserve the same respect as Buddha.'* (Myanmar Now, 2021)

Due to the warrant for arrest in accordance with Article 124 in May 2019, U Wirathu had been in hiding. When he came out of hiding on 2 November and was arrested, he was supported by ultranationalists. One of the supporters, U Parmukha, commented that

*'Arresting U Wirathu is arresting Buddhism and suppressing Buddhism. U Wirathu preached that when the 2020 elections come, vote for parties and candidates who would praise the Sasana.'* (အာကာဇိုး, 2020). On 3 November, people wearing slogans 'Vote for those who protect race and religion' distributed pamphlets and stickers in Hlegu Township of Yangon and Mandalay. (ZYM & KNW, 2020)

When campaigning in Yesagyo Township in Magwe, U Soe Maung, Chairman of the Democratic Party of National Politics and the ultranationalist Ra Hta Pa La Association, claimed that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had been sponsoring Muslim men to marry Myanmar women. He said, *"Investigate if you don't believe. Our ethnic people only get 20,000 MMK for cash assistance for covid-19, but Muslims get 800,000 MMK! Are you aware of that?"* U Aung Htun, the Chairman of the Trustee Committee, who organized the rally, said in his remarks that Myanmar would become a Muslim country by 2025 because of NLD, and therefore, people should vote for U Soe Maung's party, which would protect race and religion. (KM, 2020)

In the village sermons in Pindaya Township, Buddhist monks lobbied for the winning USDP candidate, U Arkar Lin. They preached against the NLD's candidate and Christianity that the opponent was married to a Christian. If they had won, there would be problems of false religious beliefs, and only a Buddhist would look out for the race and would not accept

support from other religions should be the person in charge of the region. (CT, 2020)

#### 4.4.2 Tensions and Violence Prior to the Elections

There were conflicts between the supporters of the National League of Democracy (NLD) and those of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). On 10 October 2020, when the USDP supporters' election campaign motorcade was passing through Targwa Village, the USDP supporters and the NLD supporters assaulted each other, resulting in several injuries. (Myanmar Now, 2020) On 22 October, violence erupted in Karbo Village of Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Region. Due to the attack of the USDP supporters, a man wearing an NLD shirt died. A house and several vehicles were also destroyed. (KNW, 2020)

#### 4.4.3 Boycotts and Protests Against the 2020 Election Result and the Union Election Commission

There were 230 ultranationalist candidates from various political parties participating in the 2020 General Elections. Although USDP won 71 seats out of 1,117 for Region and State Hluttaw, the rest of the ultranationalist parties did not win any seats. (KM, 2020) Between the elections and the coup, USDP actively contested the decision of the Union Election Commission, and the Burmese Army criticized the 2020 Elections. Ultranationalists, Pro-military, and

USDP supporters continuously protested against the 2020 Elections.

After voting on 8 November 2020, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the Burmese Army, commented that they would accept the election results. (LNL & MM, 2020) USDP held a press conference in Yangon on 11 November, saying that USDP would not recognize the 2020 General Elections as it was not a fair election. Daw Moe Moe Aye, a member of the Executive Committee of USDP Yangon Region, demanded that the Union Election Commission hold a new election in cooperation with the Burmese Army. (အောင်သိင်္ခီ & ဝေယံစိုးမြင့်, 2020)

On 10 November, around 70 USDP members and supporters protested in front of the Election Commission Office of Hlegu Township. They chanted, "Commander-in-chief U Min Aung Hlaing, please help us. Please hold a free and fair election as soon as possible." On 11 November, people protested in front of the Union Election Commission Office in Naypyitaw, chanting that the election was unfair. (PTO & ZYM, 2020) (သက်စုအောင် & သီဟထွန်း, 2020) On 15 November USDP supporters protested in Naypyitaw saying the election result and the Union Election Commission were not to be trusted and that votes were bought with Covid-19 cash assistance. (MM, 2020) (သီဟထွန်း, 2020) On 20 November, USDP supporters held a protest at a soccer field in Insein Township that they object the Union Election Commission. U Htin Kyaw, one of the protest organizers,



*Protests against the 2020 Elections in Yangon Source – Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, 2020)*

claimed that the Union Election Commission was under foreign influence, turning Burma into a prostitute just as General Aung San warned. (PTAA, 2020)

USDP and 18 allied political parties sent an open letter to the President demanding to charge the Union Election Commission. (RFA, 2020) *"In accordance with the constitution, the President is the highest authority. We wrote our grievances to him but to no avail. Then we have to take action from within the legal framework. What that is, I cannot say at this time,"* said U Khin Yi, the temporary Chairperson of USDP, at a press conference in Yangon on 26 November. (NLAN, 2020)

On 27 November, the Burmese Army said that 218 polling stations where soldiers and their families voted were undergoing investigations. (အောင်သိင်္ခ, 2020)



*Protests against the 2020 Elections in Yangon Source – Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, 2020)*



*Protests against the 2020 Elections in Yangon Source – Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, 2020)*

Yeomanry Development Party (YDP) led a pro-military rally on 28 December. Protesters chanted, 'Eradicate those under foreign influence!' 'Fraudulent votes disgrace our country and our enemy!' opposing the Union Election Commission. Daw Myo Myo Khine questioned, *"Are we ready to take up arms to defend our country together with the Burmese Army?"* to which the protesters responded, *"We are ready!"* waving flags with the Burmese Army emblem. U Pyinnyawuntha, a member of the Executive Committee of Patriotic Burmese Monks Network, with 20 other monks, joined the rally. (PTO & HMPY, 2020) Protests against the Union Election Committee and pro-military rallies also transpired in Hkhamti, Pyawbwe, Myingyan, Insein, and Patheingyi. (ခန္တီမာန်, 2020) (RFA, 2021) (အေးချမ်းသူ, 2021) (အောင်သိင်္ခ, 2021) (စိုးသိမ်း, 2021)

#### 4.4.4 Post-election Violence

After winning the election for the very first time in Tagonegyi Village of Kangyidaunt Township in Ayeyarwaddy, NLD celebrated with food and drinks for the locals. Presumably, USDP supporters hit an NLD member with rocks and killed him. (YZT, 2020)

After USDP lost the elections in Mingin Township, over 20 USDP supporters used excessively obscene language and terrorized Taungphyu Village, holding swords and batons. (KM, 2020b) On 15 November, the residence of the Chairman of the Election Commission in Kyaukse Township was shot. On 21 November, NLD candidate U Hteik Zaw who won the seat for Shan State in Amyotha Hluttaw for the first time, was shot dead. (RFA, 2020a)

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*Participants in the army rally held in east gateway to ShweDagon Pagoda attacking a civilian on 30 January 2021 (Source – Myanmar Now, 2021)*

On 30 January 2021, a crowd of over 200 people rallying for the army and protesting the Union Election Commission attacked two men. (CT, 2021) A female journalist was also assaulted, and several news media and journalists who reported on the story were threatened on social media. (ဇာဏီထွန်း, 2021)

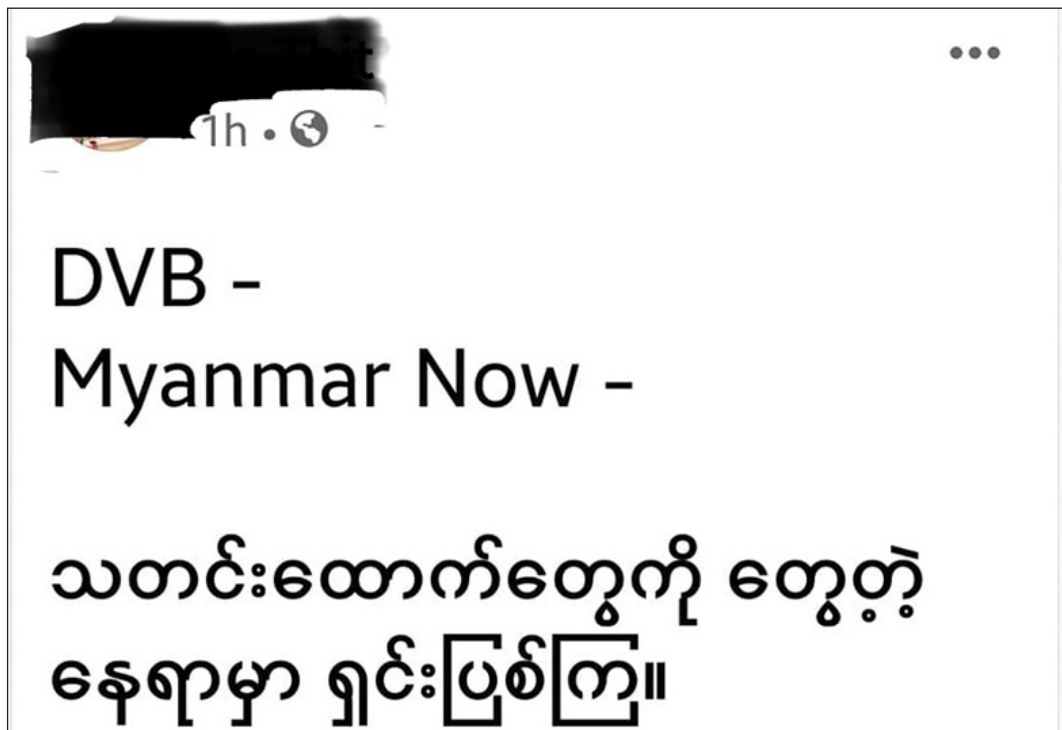


*Threats uttered by ultranationalists against reporters on Facebook (Source – True News, 2021)*



Threats uttered by ultranationalists against reporters on Facebook

(Source – Nowadays News, 2021)



Threats uttered by ultranationalists against reporters on Facebook

(Source – True News, 2021)



5

# Post-coup

## Ultrationalist Direction

After the military coup, military supporters and ultrationalists in jail, including U Hla Swe, Michael Kyaw Myint, and U Wirathu, were pardoned and released. In 2021, Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the State Administration Council (SAC), met with Ven. Kawidaza, a leading figure of MaBaTha from Zwegabin Monastery in Hpa-an, and Ven. Vimala Buddhi, the General Secretary of MaBaTha from Myazedi Monastery

in Mawlamyine. (*Myanmar Now*, 2021a)

On the anniversary of the coup in 2022, SAC Chairman Min Aung Hlaing claimed that the NLD government used excuses to abolish Parahita (Philanthropy) organizations such as MaBaTha working for the protection of race and religion, which led to the downfall of race and religion and raising concerns for the



*Buddhist monks protesting against military (Source – Myanmar Now)*

Burmese culture. (*Myanmar Now*, 2022) U Tilawka, a leading figure of MaBaTha from Insein Ywarma, was decorated with the highest honor in religion by SAC. (ဉာဏ်နိုင်လင်း, 2022) On the other hand, Buddhist monks protesting against the military dictator were arrested, jailed, and tortured. (*Myanmar Now*, 2021c)

### 5.1 Pro-Military Rallies

On 9 February 2021, pro-military and ultranationalists staged protests in Yangon to counter the anti-dictatorship protests. The pro-military protesters carrying batons and daggers threatened the peaceful protesters.

(*RFA*, 2021b) On 25 February, participants of a pro-military rally assaulted anti-dictatorship protesters. One was stabbed, several were injured, and a few vehicles were damaged. (တင်အောင်နိုင်, 2021) (ခင်မောင်စိုး, 2021) In October 2021, prior to the ASEAN summit, pro-military rallies broke out nationwide. (*Myanmar Now*, 2021d) (*RFA*, 2021c) People were pressured or bribed to participate in the pro-military rallies. On 25 October, Michael Kyaw Myint gave a speech at a pro-military rally in Mandalay, and on 26 October, Ngar Min Swe, who supported the coup, gave a speech at a pro-military rally in Thanbyuzayat in Mon State. (*Myanmar Now*, 2021e)



*Pro-military rally in Meiktila on 25 October 2021 (Source – RFA, 2022)*



*A rally led by USDP in support of the SAC's peace process in front of Yangon City Hall  
on 19 May 2022 (Source – RFA, 2022)*



*A rally in support of the SAC's execution in front of Yangon City Hall  
on 29 July 2022 (Source – RFA, 2022)*

Pro-military rallies persisted in 2022. (ဒီဇွေဦး, 2022) (ကိုချို, 2022) (RFA, 2022) When 4 political prisoners, including U Jimmy and U Phyo Zeya Thaw, were executed, military supporters harassed the residences of U Jimmy and U Phyo Zeya Thaw by cursing, threatening and throwing rocks and eggs. (ခင်မောင်စိုး, 2022) A former representative of Hluttaw, U Hla Swe, and ultranationalists led a rally in support of the SAC's execution.



*A rally in support of the SAC's execution in front  
of Yangon City Hall on 29 July 2022  
(Source – RFA, 2022)*

## The Challenge of Nationalism and Hatred

### 5.2 Media

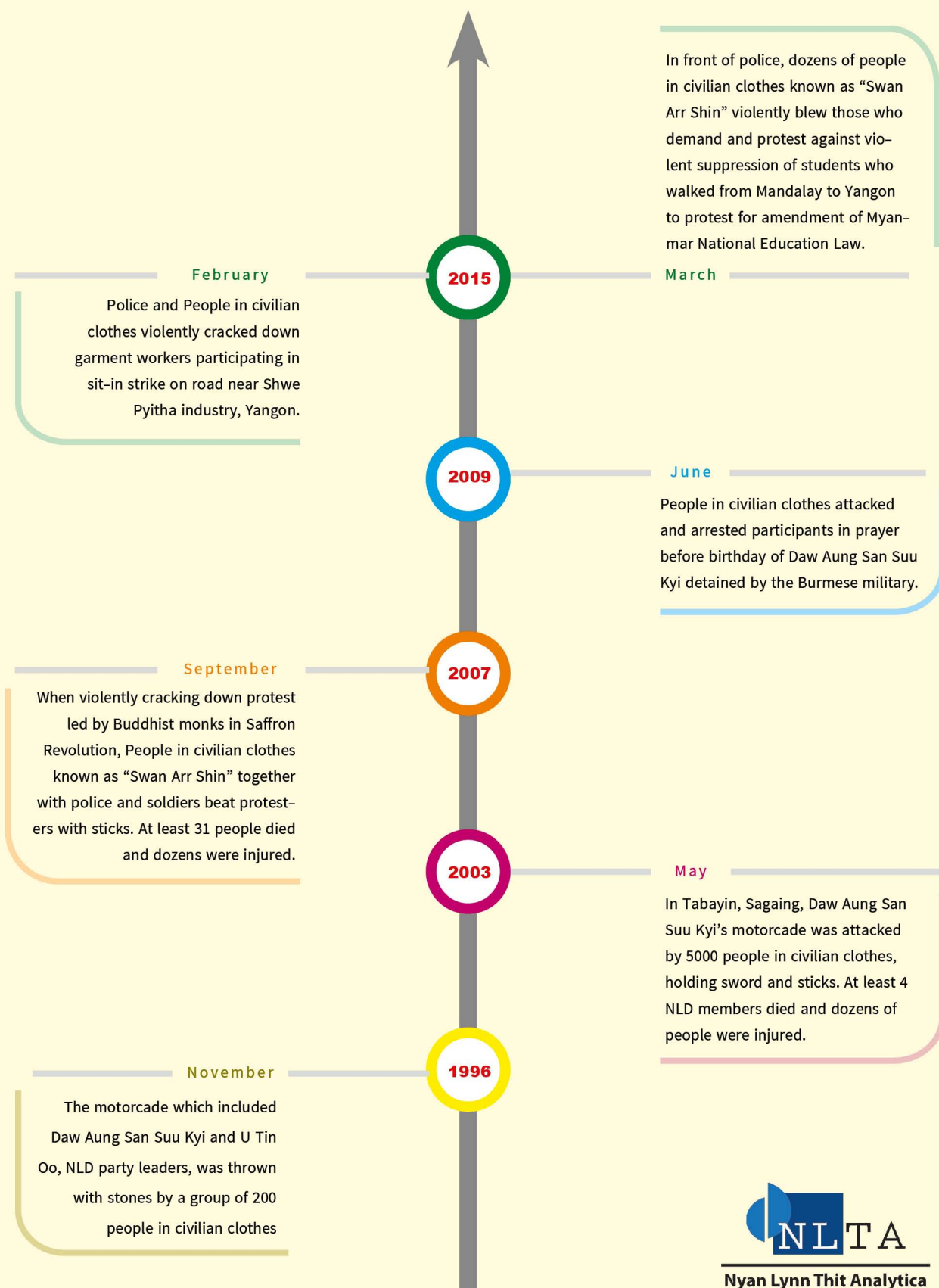
Since the coup on 1 February 2021, military supporters and ultranationalists infiltrated the media sector, regularly attended SAC's press conferences, and spread propaganda. Additionally, they lobbied for SAC on social media and attacked revolutionary forces. On

the other hand, ultranationalist groups regarded the media who reported on SAC's actions as traitors bankrolled by foreign countries who would destroy Burma and threatened these media. Military supporters also informed the SAC via Telegram channels to arrest those involved with the anti-dictatorship revolution.

97 Media	People Media
Bullet News Journal	Sky Daily News
BB Channel News	Trend Journal
General Light Media	Voice of Myanmar
Myanmar Hard Talk	Khit Thit Pon Yeik News
Myanmar Insider Journal	Naypyitaw Hit Taing News
Myanmar National Post	Naypyitaw Online News
Myanmar National Voice	Naing Ngan Thitsar News
Myanmar Public Press	Shwe Tri Gan News Journal
NHP	Suriya Nay Wun
NP News	Lu Htu Yin Phwint Than
One News	De Pyaw News

*Some of News media that attend SAC press conferences regularly.*

# Violence committed by Swan Arr Shin (Military Stooge)

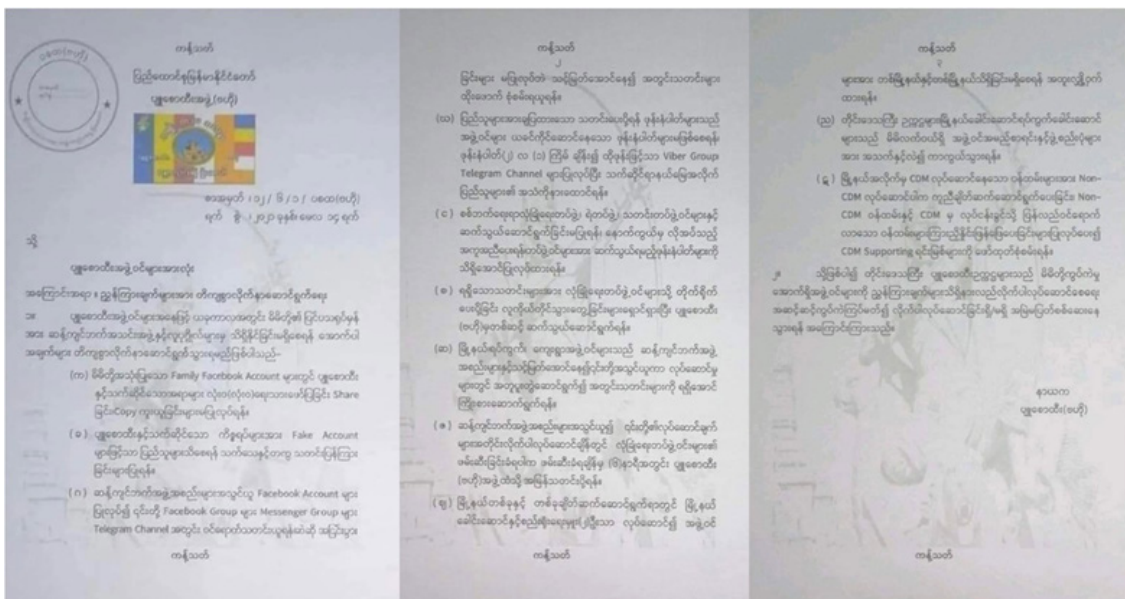


### 5.3 Pyu Saw Htees: Militia of the New Age

Pyu Saw Htee Group (Central) announced that it was formed in secrecy in Mandalay on 5 March 2021. Mandalay Region Pyu Saw Htee (Upper Burma) and Yangon Region Pyu Saw Htee (Lower Burma) were formed initially and soon expanded to other regions. (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021*)

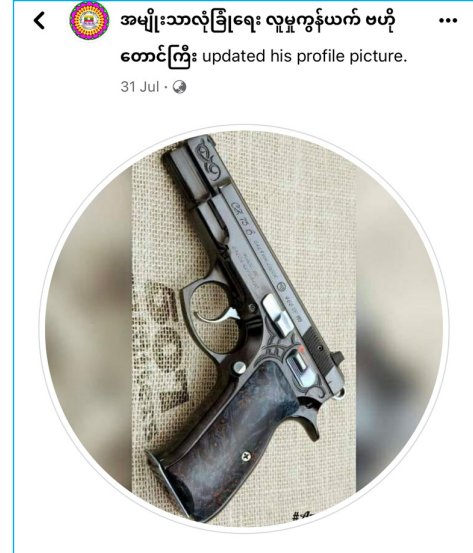
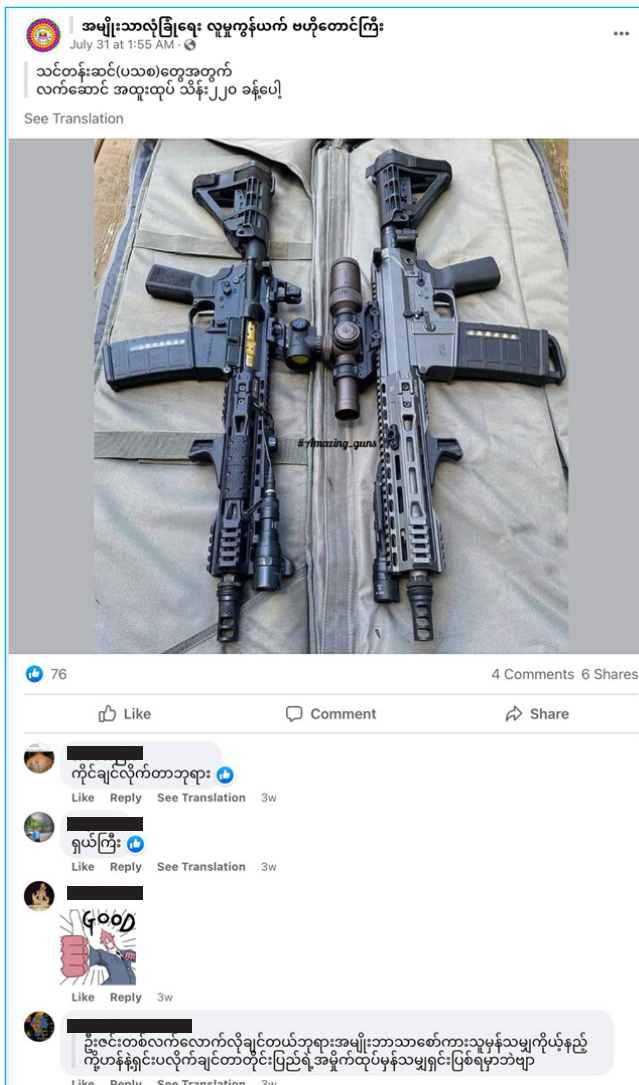
Pyu Saw Htee Group consisted of military veterans, military supporters, USDP members and supporters, MaBaTha members, and other ultranationalists. (*The Irrawaddy, 2022*) (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021*) (*RFA, 2022a*) Some members of the Pyu Saw Htee Group were hired. (*The Irrawaddy, 2021*) A video showing armed Buddhist monks being welcomed by locals in Sagaing Region went viral on social media. (*RFA, 2022b*) "*Certain villages support the PDFs*

(*People's Defense Force*). Locals know very well. If it is true that they support PDFs, they should be taught a lesson and erase them from the map of Burma. This is to eradicate the support," said U Wathawa in an interview with a pro-military media. (*Myanmar Now, 2020b*) The main objectives of the Pyu Saw Htee Group were (1) to investigate those opposing the dictatorship, (2) to find out list and information about those leading protests, (3) to find out information about weapon inventors and those who took military training, (4) to protect those deemed 'informers' and those who were subject to social punishment and (5) to support military veterans and families. (*BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021*) Pyu Saw Htees patrolled villages and towns carrying arms with civilian clothes. They attack villages, rob any valuables, burn, kill villagers, and attack PDFs and other revolutionary forces alongside the soldiers from the Burmese Army.



Letter of Pyu Saw Htee (Central) (Source – Myanmar Now, 2021)

## The Challenge of Nationalism and Hatred



Images from the "National Security Network Central Taunggyi"

Facebook page on 31 July 2022

SAC Deputy Minister of Information, General Zaw Min Tun, said militias were formed due to local unrest and denied the existence of the Pyu Saw Htees. (RFA, 2022a) At SAC Press Conference on 6/2021, ultranationalist Daw Shwe Sin asked if *"military supporters could bear arms for self-protection."* He answered, *"one could bear arms for self-defense".* (BBC News မြန်မာ, 2021) In April 2022, he also

commented that SAC would implement a people's security system in which the army, police, regional security, and the public were included. He further explained that China, India, and ASEAN countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam all practiced a people's security system. (DVB, 2022) In a press conference on 26 July 2022, SAC said local militias could contact regional commands for support and

that regional commands would provide support and training for militias. On 30 July, a forming ceremony of militias at the General Administration Office, Mahar Aung Myay Township, was held, and some pro-military supporters were armed. (မယ်ရီနှင့်, 2022)

Starting in May 2022, the Pa-O National Army under the Pa-O National Organization of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone started recruiting by force from villages in the region and provided military training. (အက်စတာဂျေ, 2022) On 6 July, PNO announced that a security force would be formed to protect the well-being of the Pa-O ethnic people and other ethnic groups as well as the tranquility and security in Special Region 6. (အက်စတာဂျေ, 2022) PNO announced that over 500 male and female Pa-O youths were trained. (BBC News မြန်မာ, 2022) In



Images from the "National Security Network Central Taunggyi" Facebook page on 31 July 2022

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September, 5 PNLO (Pa-O National Liberation Organization) members were killed by PNO militia in Pinlaung Township of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone. (စံကျော်, 2022) (*Shan News*, 2022) Naymingyi Sayadaw U Pyinnyananda from the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone regularly posted about race and religion on the "National Security Network Central Taunggyi" Facebook page and also posted photos of weapons with threatening messages.

## 5.4 Thway Thauk Group

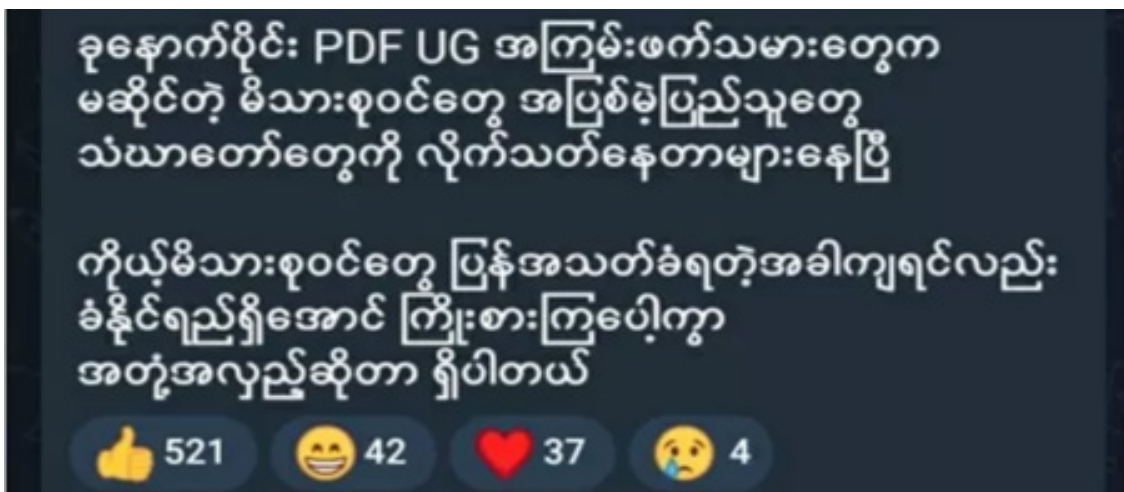
On 21 April 2022, Telegram channels that regularly posted pro-SAC news started posting threatening messages to People's Defense Forces (PDFs), urban guerrilla forces, and their families.

On the same day, the Thway Thauks of Mandalay released the Operation Red Announcement. Similarly, Yangon Castigate Group (YCS) in Yangon, Sunn Ye Group (Kite) in Tanintharyi, Thway Thitsa in Naypyitaw, and Patriotic

Alliance in Pyay emerged. (RFA, 2022c) Thway Thauk Groups were formed with some pro-military political party leaders, organizers of pro-military rallies, and Defense Services Academy (DSA) alumni. (THE IRRRAWADDY, 2022) An audio interview with a Thway Thauk member went viral on Facebook and Telegram channels.

*"The red Thway Thauk group is made up of people who cherish our race, religion, and country. We are people who would love to see peace and development in Myanmar. NUG, CRPH, and PDFs kill Buddhist monks, set up mines for novice Buddhist monks, kill teachers, and threaten soldiers, police, and their families. We are formed for retaliation. Thway Thauk Group was contacted from 13 places, including Taunggyi, Naypyidaw, Yangon, Mogok, Madaya, and Sagaing. If we are charged, we would happily walk to the hanging noose,"* said the Thway Thauk member in the interview.

On 25 April, the list of 6 types of people to be retaliated against by the Thway Thauk Group was posted on social media.



Threatening messages in Telegram Channel (Source – BBC Burmese, 2022)



**Announcement of Operation Red by Thway Thout (Source – BBC Burmese, 2022)**

The Thway Thauk Group Telegram posted on 25 April that editors and journalists from Khit Thit Media, The Irrawaddy, Mizzima, DVB, and Irrawaddy Times and their families should be eliminated. (အောင်သိင်္ခီ, 2022) At a press conference on 27 April, SAC spokesperson General Zaw Min Tun accused that the media, such as RFA, DVB, Mizzima, Myanmar Now, The Irrawaddy, and Khit Thit were writing articles and news with incitements with the intention of destroying the country. (RFA, 2022c) Furthermore, he denied that apart from the militia, there were no other organizations. (RFA, 2022c) However, eyewitnesses claimed that the dead bodies of those murdered by the

Thway Thauk Group were dropped off from police vehicles. (BBC Newsမြန်မာ, 2022a) (THE IRRAWADDY, 2022a)

Two weeks after the formation of the Thway Thauk Group, some NLD senior members officially declared that 14 NLD party members and supporters were murdered. 8 of the murders were in Mandalay, and others were in Naypyitaw, Yangon, Bago, and Tanintharyi. The remains were dumped in public areas wearing red lanyards labeled Thway Thauk Group. (RFA, 2022c) (RFA, 2022e) (DVB, 2022b) (DVB, 2022b)



**List of types of people to be retaliated against by the Thway Thauk (Source – BBC Burmese, 2022)**

## 6 Conclusion

During the U Thein Sein led government, despite the public protesting Chinese projects such as the Crude Oil and Petroleum Pipelines, the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam, and the Letpadaung Copper Mine, only the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam Project was suspended. The construction of the Crude Oil and Petroleum Pipelines was completed during conflicts between Muslim and Buddhist communities. Buddhist monks and protesters of the Copper Mine Project faced violent crackdowns by security forces, unable to shut down the project. After the 2021 military coup, Buddhist monks protesting the military dictatorship were arrested, tortured, and jailed. The Burmese army violently cracked down on protesters using the full force of the security forces. However, there were never enough security forces to contain racial and religious conflicts.

Throughout the history of Myanmar, racial/religious conflicts and civil unrest were generally based on rumors or simple misunderstandings escalating to violence. Over the years, the Burmese army regularly utilized racial/religious propaganda in order to distract people from opposing them and their vested interests.

Security forces never made enough efforts to effectively quell violences. Furthermore, the 1978 Operation Naga-min, the 1992 Operation Pyi-thar-yar, and the 2017 Rohingya Genocides were apparent indications of the acts of violence of the Burmese army. Anti-Muslim propaganda and pamphlets were distributed to the public prior to the riots occurring around 2001 and 2003.

Ultrationalist movements gained momentum after 2010, and the anti-Muslim 969 movement infiltrated the public. The 2012 Rakhine Conflict and the 2013 Meiktila Conflict transpired consecutively. Since the formation of the Patriotic Association of Myanmar, ultrationalist movements became widespread. Prior to the 2015 General Elections, MaBaTha lobbied to enact Race and Religion Protection Laws. During the NLD led government, there were tensions between MaBaTha and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture. Although MaBaTha was abolished, ultrationalist movements were still going strong. Also, utilization of race and religion occurred in 2015 and 2020 election campaigns. The majority of the campaigning based on race and religion did not manage to

capture public support. However, during NLD led government, when Burma was sued at the International Court of Justice for the Burmese Army's genocide of the Rohingya people, the public stood with Aung San Suu Kyi, who defended the Burmese Army. After the 2021 military coup, the public openly expressed their will to punish the Burmese Army that perpetrated the Rohingya genocide and systematic oppression of minorities. However, taking a stance with the oppressed should not be for short-term interest but for long-term fortitude. It is absolutely vital that the public understand that the deliberate dispersal of hate speech escalated conflicts.

When USDP and the Burmese army criticized the 2020 Elections result and the Union Election Commission, military supporters and ultranationalists protested against the Union Election Commission and the election results and held pro-military rallies. During campaigns and protests, military supporters and ultranationalists threatened NLD supporters and the media, resulting in several deaths. After the coup, military supporters and ultranationalists acted as media in SAC press conferences and spread propaganda on social media.

The Burmese army backed Swan-ar-shin Group to repress those opposing the military and portray that disagreements between communities lead to inter-communal conflicts. Since the coup, the Burmese army, military supporters, and ultranationalists portrayed

revolutionary forces as terrorists who murdered Buddhist monks and people. With the reason of self-defense, SAC armed military supporters and ultranationalists who were known as repressive murderous forces, the Pyu Saw Htees, and the Thway Thouk groups against revolutionary groups. SAC repeatedly referred to those forces as militia. It is vital to keep track of the actions of military supporters and ultranationalists in the political context to prevent the distribution of propaganda and hate speech which could potentially lead to more violent conflicts. The public should take caution not to spread hate speech themselves as well.

Distribution and hatred exist all over the world to this day. It is not easy to extinguish hatred fully, but each individual could take caution not to escalate and to reduce hatred. It is absolutely vital to avoid writing hate speech content on social media. Individual understanding and community cooperation are essential to prevent the transmission of hatred and incitement, which escalates to violence. The ultimate objective of the Spring Revolution is not simply to oppose the military dictatorship but also to build a community that values diversity and peaceful coexistence and to break the repetition of horrendous events based on hatred. When seeking for justice in the post-revolutionary period, it should be paramount to break the vicious cycle of extreme judgments based on the hatred that could desecrate the revolution's essence and values.

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## Appendix -1

[အမျိုးမျိုးပျောက်မှာစိုးကြောက်စရာ]

### မာတိကာ

J

#### စာစုခေါင်းစဉ်

#### စာမျက်နှာ

◆ လူမျိုးမပျောက်ရေး စိတ်မအေးနဲ့	၃
◆ အဆိပ်ပင်ရေမလောင်းသင့်	၄
◆ ကြောက်စရာအကောင်းဆုံး အန္တရာယ်	၄
◆ ၇၈၆ ကိုရှောင်စေလို	၈
◆ အစွလာမ်လာသာသမိုင်းအကျဉ်း	၈
◆ ညီညွတ်မှုပွား တိုးအမျိုးသား	၁၂
◆ ရှင်ရဟန်းမှာပြုပြင်ပါ	၁၃
◆ အီရန်နိုင်ငံနှင့် အစွလာမ်ဘာသာ	၁၃
◆ ဥရောပတွင် အစွလာမ်ဘာသာရောက်ရှိပုံ	၁၃
◆ အန္တိယနှင့် အစွလာမ်ဘာသာ	၁၄
◆ အတွက်မှားက ရတက်ပွားရ	၁၇
◆ အင်ဒိုနီးရှား၊ မလေးရှား ၊ စင်ကာပူနိုင်ငံများကို မူဆလင်ဝါးမျိုးခြင်း	၁၈
◆ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံနှင့် အစွလာမ်ဘာသာ	၁၉
◆ သတိပြုပါ ထေရ်သံဃာ	၂၅
◆ အာဖရိကန်နွတ်နှင့် ပါကစ္စတန်နိုင်ငံများကို မူဆလင်ဝါးမျိုးခြင်း	၂၅
◆ တရုတ်ပြည်အရှေ့ဖျားဒေသများနှင့် အစွလာမ်ဘာသာ	၂၅
◆ ယနေ့ကမ္ဘာအရပ်ရပ်ရှိ အစွလာမ်ဘာသာဝင်များ	၂၇
◆ ဒံပေါက်ကျွန်းမှ ဂုဏ်ရှိမှာလား	၂၈
◆ အစွလာမ်ဘာသာဝင်များ ဖုရားဖူး(ဟာဂျီ)သွားရောက်ခြင်းအကြောင်း	၂၉
◆ နိဂုံး	၂၉
◆ မူဆလင်များ၏ လျှို့ဝှက်ဖြန့်ဝေချက်	၃၂
◆ အစွလာမ်သာသနာပြုလမ်းညွှန်ချက်စာအုပ်မှကောက်နုတ်ချက်	၃၃
◆ ရင်နာစရာဘဝဖြစ်အင်	၃၅
◆ ရွှေခုံးဘီအောင်၏ ကိုယ်တော်ကဏ္ဍ(၁)	၃၅
◆ မော်လမြိုင်မြို့မှ ရင်နှင့်ဖွယ်ဇာတ်လမ်းတစ်ပုဒ်	၅၀
◆ မျိုးချစ်ဇာနည်	၅၁
◆ သိကြားမိုးအချိန်တန်ပြီ	၅၂
◆ မူဆလင်ကုလားတို့၏ ၇၈၆ ဟူသော အဓိပ္ပါယ်	၅၃
◆ မိဘများ သတိပြုစရာ	၅၃
◆ ရဟန်းတော်များ သတိပြုရန်	၅၃
◆ တားမြစ်ကြပါ	၅၃
◆ ဈေးမဝယ်သင့်	၅၄
◆ ညံ့လွန်းနေတာ စဉ်းစားကြ	၅၄

Content of a book named 'A-myo-pyauk-hmar-soe-kyauk-sayar' distributed in 2001

## Appendix -2

သို့

နေ့စွဲ။

အရှင်ဘဝန္တသုနမ  
(အဂ္ဂမဟာပဏ္ဍိတ)  
(အဂ္ဂမဟာ ဂန္ထဝါဏပဏ္ဍိတ)  
ဗြူနယ်သံဃနာယဥက္ကဋ္ဌ  
မိတ္ထီလာမြို့။

အကြောင်းအရာ။

။ ကိုးလန့်အစာစားဖြစ်နေသော ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာမြန်မာများ ဗုဒ္ဓအား တင်မြှောက်ထားပါသည် ဘုရား။

- (၁) အထက်ပါကိစ္စနှင့် ပတ်သက်၍ မိတ္ထီလာမြို့ရှိ ဗုဒ္ဓဆလင်ဘာသာဝင်များသည် ယခင်ကာလထက် ကျားကုလားများသည် ကုလားဗလီဝတ်စုံဖြင့် ဗြူတွင်း၌ လှည့်လည်သွားပြနေခြင်း။
- (၂) ၎င်းကုလားထဲတွင် မမြင်ဘူးသော ကုလားများပါဝင်နေခြင်း။
- (၃) ၎င်းကုလားများ၏ အစ်ကြီး/အစ်လေး နှင့်လည်း (ကာလ)မဟုတ်ပါဘဲ ဗလီများ၌ အစည်းအဝေးများ တက်ရောက်နေခြင်း။ (နေ့/ည)
- (၄) ဆော်ဒီနိုင်ငံမှ ဗလီများထံ ငွေသိန်းပေါင်းများစွာ ချပေးထားသောငွေများနှင့် ဗြူဝင်-ဗြူထွက်များတွင် ခြေ/ယာ/နေအိမ်များကို မြန်မာပွဲစားအမည်ခံပြီး အဆမတန်စွာပေး၍ ဝယ်ယူနေခြင်း။
- (၅) ပြည်သာယာမြောက်ပိုင်းမှ မြန်မာအမျိုးသမီး (၂)ဦးအား ကုလား (၂)ဦးနှင့် ဗလီမှ တာဝန်ယူ၍ ပေးစားထားခြင်း။
- (၆) ထို့အပြင် ကလေးစားသောကံသော မုန့်၊ အချို့ဈေး ဆန်းဝေးလွှဲကံရည်ထုတ်များတွင် (ဟာလာ)တံဆိပ်ပါမှ ကုလားများစားသောက်ရန်ဟူသော ကုလားအချင်းချင်းသတိပေးထားခြင်း။
- (၇) ဆော်ဒီနိုင်ငံမှချပေးသောငွေများဖြင့် တိုက်/အိမ် ဆောက်ရန်ပစ္စည်းများရောင်းသောဆိုင် (ကုလားဆိုင်) မှ ဗြူတုပ်ချုပ်သော အာဏာပိုင်ရှင်များအား အကြွေးဖြင့် ရောင်းချခြင်း။
- (၈) ထိုပစ္စည်းများဝယ်မိသော အစိုးရဌာနတစ်ချို့မှ အာဏာပိုင်ရှင်များ (တစ်ချို့)သည် ကုလားများလှုပ်ရှားမှုကို မမြင်ချင်ယောင်ဆောင်တတ်ခြင်း။
- (၉) ထိုအကြွေးဖြင့်ကြီးချုပ်ခံထားရသော အာဏာပိုင်ရှင်တို့သည် ဗလီများထံသို့ ဧည့်သည်၊ အစည်းအဝေးများအား လုံးဝ စုံစမ်းခြင်း မပြုလုပ်ပါ။
- (၁၀) စစ်နူးချုပ်ကြီးသဖွယ် ဗလီကြီးများ၏ အာဏာသည် မြန်မာဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဘုန်းကြီးကျောင်းထက် ဘုန်းကံကြီးမားနေခြင်းကို လိုလားခြင်း။
- (၁၁) အဂတိလိုက်စားမှုသည် ဘာသာရေးကို မပျက်စီးစေလိုပါကြောင်း။
- (၁၂) နေ့အလိုက် ဗလီတက်နေသော ကုလားထုကြီးအား မြင်တွေ့နေရသော ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာဝင်များ၏ ကိုးလန့်စာစား ဖြစ်နေပါ၍ အဂတိမလိုက်စားသော ရဟန်းတော်များအား တပည့်တော်တို့ အားကိုးပါရစေဘုရား။
- (၁၃) အထက်ပါဖြစ်ရပ်များအား စုံစမ်းစစ်ဆေးတော်မူပါဘုရား။

(ခိုကိုးရာမဲ့ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာများ)  
မိတ္ထီလာမြို့။

Letter distributed in and around Meiktila shortly before the violence

(Source – Burma Campaign UK, 2013)