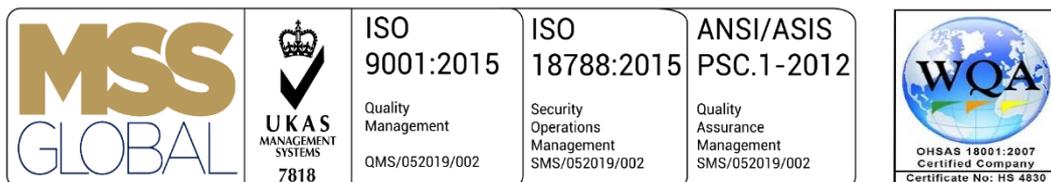


# EXERA

## Weekly Security Review

Safety and Security Highlights for Clients Operating in Myanmar

Dates covered: 9 July – 15 July 2020



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Covid -19 pandemic

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR), the figure for 8 July at 08:00 hrs was 316 confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 17 more than the previous week.

As of 15 July, at 08:00 Hrs, 337 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 21 new cases in the last week. All of them came back from other countries: 7 from India, 4 from Thailand, 3 from Philippines, 3 from Bangladesh, 2 from UK, 1 from USA and 1 from UAE.

The week was marked by the announcement by Vice-President Henry Van Thio that commercial international flights may remain suspended until 1 October, and by the MoHS announcement that people who need to travel abroad urgently can now get tested for a fee by the National Health Laboratory.

### Internal Conflict

In Rakhine State, military clashes now focus on Southern Rathedaung Township. One woman filed a complaint for rape against 4 Myanmar Army soldiers. Abductions of security personnel continue, with 2 people kidnapped during the reporting period. Civilian arrests by the Tatmadaw go unabated; one detainee died during interrogation this week, reportedly from torture. Tension is mounting on Ramree Island, with frequent arrests and massive deployment of Tatmadaw troops. On 9 July, the CSO Arakan Oil Watch prompted foreign oil companies to stop investing in Rakhine, as it contributes to the Central Government and to the Army.

In Shan State, no major clash was reported with EAOs. However, 2 people were injured by landmines. Overall, the Myanmar Army seems to be cracking down on local militias. Tension is mounting, and uncertainty increases about the future of the cooperation between Tatmadaw and militias.

On 8 July, the Myanmar institute for Peace and Security (MIPS) released its annual report for 2019. Based on the organization's database, more than 1,000 clashes broke out in Myanmar in 2019, killing approximately 1,700 Tatmadaw soldiers and 900 EAO members; they also killed 151 civilians and injured 384 others.

### Myanmar General Elections

During the reporting period, ethnic parties expressed their concerns about the campaign, dreading that material conditions (Covid-19 crisis or conflict) may put them at a disadvantage compared to the major Myanmar parties. Both USDP and NLD were very confident about the scores they may get. Rumours ran high about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's candidature in Nay Pyi Taw Region.

## INTERNAL CONFLICT

### Main incidents

#### Rakhine State

The main incidents collected through news outlets, reliable social media accounts and informers on the ground are the following (fig. 1):

- 1) 8 July, Ponnagyun Township: a police officer disappeared while traveling to Sittwe to deliver mail to the local police department.
- 2) 9 July, Sittwe Township: a former Myanmar Army soldier converted into border guard police officer disappeared while traveling to Sittwe to buy food for his cantonment. He served in Buthidaung Township.
- 3) 10, July, Taungup Township: on that day, it was learnt that a couple had been arrested on 3 July in connection with the blast that killed 4 people in Tharaba village on 29 June. One of the people killed in that blast was a regular visitor to this couple's house. The Tatmadaw therefore assumed a link between that couple and the presumed bombers.
- 4) 11 July, Rathedaung Township: two women from Aung Ba La village were wounded. According to local residents, the incident happened at 14:00, when Myanmar Army shot at their village, reportedly in an indiscriminate way.
- 5) 11 July, Sittwe Township: the authorities reported that they found two remote mines near the Government Technical College, beside the Sittwe - Ye Chan Pyin area. Ye Chan Pyin area was already rocked by explosions late June.
- 6) 11 July, Ponnagyun Township: a 75 year-old man was killed and a woman was wounded when caught in a crossfire in Ywa Haung village tract.
- 7) 11 July, Kyaukphyu Township: two villagers from Saing Chon Village were arrested by the Myanmar Army and detained in Danyawaddy Naval Base (in Kyaukphyu town) according to their families. The army came into their village at 16:00 hrs and gathered all the residents at the local school. Those two villagers were arrested for alleged links with the AA.
- 8) 11 July, Ramree Township: 6 villagers from Ah Lel Chaung were arrested by the Myanmar Army. The village administrator said that two battalions deployed inside and outside the village at 3 am and checked residents lists. The army was specifically looking for those 6 people and accused them of fostering links with the AA. Shortly after, a Member of Parliament for the local

constituency stated that one of the 6 arrestees had died in a hospital, presumably because of torture.

- 9) 12 July, Rathedaung Township: fighting broke out between Myanmar Army and AA near Thawin Chaung bridge. The AA ambushed soldiers who were coming back from Kyauk Pan Du village in Maungdaw Township. Myanmar Army has deployed troops in Southern Rathedaung Township. They are ferried to Ah Ngu Maw jetting, before moving up north.
- 10) 12 July, Ann Township: 2 Kazu Khine residents were wounded when Myanmar Army shelled a boat. The passengers blamed Myanmar Army troops stationed on Dar Let bridge. Myanmar Army has blocked all the roads in Dar Let village tract (46 villages). In Kazu Khine area, water way is the only communication way still available.
- 11) 11 July, Mrauk-U Township: 1 man and 2 teenagers were forced to act as guides for the Myanmar Army in Ywa Haung region. They were arrested on 11 July at 17:00 hrs; the teenagers were released on the following day at 7:00 hrs, but the adult has remained detained. Such practices are illegal under international laws.
- 12) 12 and 13 July, Rathedaung Township: clashes broke out near Chein Khar Li village, in the southern part of the township, on the way to Maungdaw. Information vary about the amount of civilian casualties; up to 3 residents of Chein Khar Li were reportedly killed. The AA claimed they killed 15 Tatmadaw soldiers. Reportedly, the AA also sustained losses. Some villagers were briefly arrested but then released. Some villagers trapped by the clashes could be rescued on 14 July.
- 13) 13 July, Kyaukphyu Township: one resident from Ye Nan Twin village was arrested by Myanmar Army for alleged ties with the AA. He was taken away to a Tatmadaw base for interrogation.

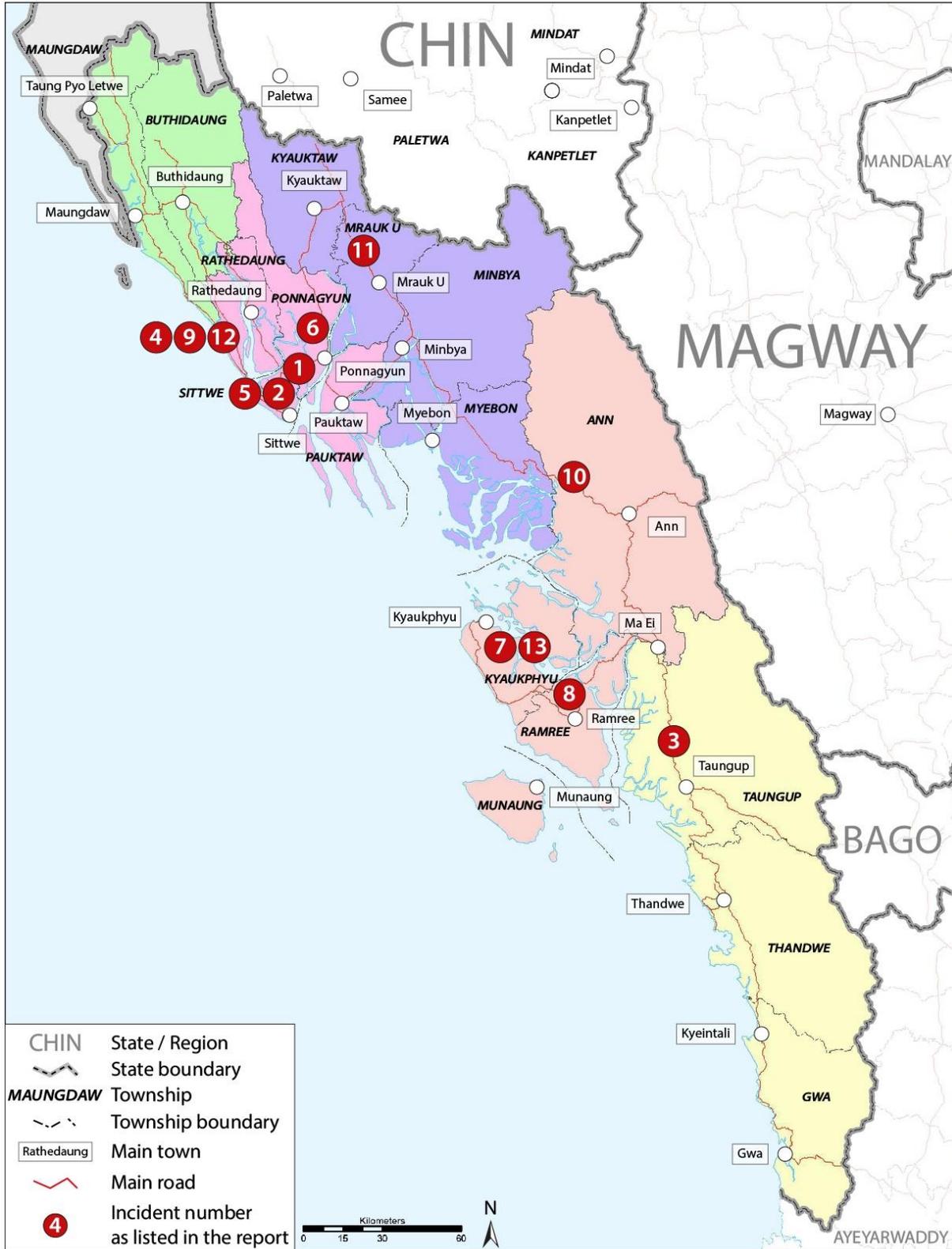


Figure 1: Security incidents in Rakhine State between 9 July and 15 July 2020.

## Shan State

In Shan State, the main incidents were the following:

- 1) 9 July, Namtu Township: a girl from Chong Sar village was reportedly raped by an RCSS/SSA-S soldier. The organization accepted an invitation by local CSOs to discuss the issue on 13 July but failed to attend. On 14 July, a spokesperson for RCSS/SSA-S rebuffed the accusations against the soldier.
- 2) 10 July, Hseni Township: a man was wounded by a landmine or an Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) blast when working in his field. He has been treated in Lashio Hospital
- 3) 12 July, Kutkai Township: a 30 year-old man was wounded by an explosion while cutting bamboo in the forest. He was seriously wounded and transported to Muse Hospital. Fighting broke out in this region on 9 July. The explosion may be due to a landmine or an UXO.

## Analysis and comment

### Nationwide

On 8 July, the Myanmar institute for Peace and Security (MIPS) released its [annual report for 2019](#). Based on the organization's database, more than 1,000 clashes broke out in Myanmar in 2019. The fatalities figures are as follows:

Conflicts	Fatalities on Tatmadaw side	Fatalities on EAOs side
Tatmadaw vs AA	1,500	800
Tatmadaw vs TNLA	120	80
Others	80	20
Total	1,700	900

Conflicts also took a heavy toll over the civilian population: according to MIPS, 151 civilians were killed and 384 wounded by clashes or landmines.

On 7 and 8 July, a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meeting was held in Yangon. The JMC purpose is to monitor the ceasefire and to provide a communication channel between the Tatmadaw and the signatories. The JMC convened for the first time since September 2019. This long halt was due to ongoing tensions between the Tatmadaw, the KNU and the RCSS/SSA-S. On 10 July, the deputy chairman of the JMC pointed out that the mutual trust had been damaged by such a long pause and

by the tensions which took place within the last year. Such statement usually hints that the outcome of the discussions was disappointing.

## **Rakhine State**

In Rakhine State, the conflict trend we have identified in the last few weeks is going on: heavy, sustained offensives remain scarce; major clashes are now concentrated in Southern Rathedaung Township, along the road leading up north to Maungdaw. This road is strategic, as it used to be the only safe road left to Maungdaw for supplies or NGO personnel. Tension also seems to be mounting on Ramree Island, with numerous arrests and increasing troop deployments: there used to be approximately 1,000 Tatmadaw soldiers in Kyaukphyu Township in May; 600 more were sent out in reinforcement in June, and 400 others in the first half of July. As of 9 July, our source estimates there may be approximately 2,000 Tatmadaw soldiers in the township.

The abduction of security personnel also went unabated, with a policeman and a Border Guard Police officer disappearing within the same area of Sittwe-Ponnagyun. Facing the attacks on softer targets that have become the norm since early June, the Myanmar authorities have led waves of arrest throughout Rakhine State, for alleged ties with the AA. One of the common features of those arrests is their opacity.

On 11 July, the family of U Myo Lwin, the chairman of the local Arakan National Party (ANP) branch, complained that he had been arrested for more than a month, but that they had not received any news about him, his location or his health condition. In some cases, allegations of severe human rights abuses emerge. On 11 July, 6 residents of Ah Le Chaung village were arrested; one of them died shortly after, reportedly as the result of sustained torture by the Myanmar military. The military have rebuffed the accusation, claiming the villager hanged himself in his cell. Such news, and such conflictive narratives, may fuel the resentment towards the Myanmar Army and prompt more people to join the AA ranks. Since the beginning of the conflict with the AA, 18 civilians have died during interrogation by Myanmar Army in the sole townships of Kyauktaw, Mrauk-U, Minbya and Rathedaung.

One of the incidents that made the headline during the reporting period is the lawsuit filed by a Rakhine woman from U Gar village (Rathedaung Township) against 4 Tatmadaw soldiers, who allegedly gang-raped her. Brigadier -General Zaw Min Tun, a spokesperson for Myanmar Army, denied this accusation and claimed that she made up the story to tarnish the Tatmadaw's reputation.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation remains critical. According to the local NGO Rakhine Ethnic Congress, almost 200,000 people have been displaced in Rakhine State since the beginning of the conflict, early 2018. Out of them, approximately 70,000 stay in IDP camps, while the others stay at relatives' places. The townships with most IDPs are Mrauk-U (17,400 people), Kyauktaw (11,500 people),

Rathedaung (9,700 people) and Buthidaung (8,800 people). The conflict has also impacted the food security situation in areas locked down by the military, especially in Dar Let region (Ann Township). Locally, the situation is compounded by the military requisition of almost 140 boats, which deprive residents from transportation means.

On 9 July, the Rakhine Civil Society Organization “Arakan Oil Watch” issued a report, titled “Fuelling Conflict: Investment Exacerbating Turmoil In Western Burma”. This document urges foreign oil companies to halt their investments in Rakhine State. According to the organization, those investments are used by the Myanmar Government to ramp up its military capabilities, and that they destabilize the whole region. The report also advocates for a decentralized resource management which would benefit more the local communities.

On 10 July, the European Commission requested the Myanmar Government to show its improvements in terms of human rights, with a special focus on efforts and results in Rakhine State. A EU delegation was supposed to visit Myanmar this summer, but this visit was cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis.

On a more positive note, a UNWFP convoy transporting 1,465 bags of rice arrived in Paletwa on 8 July to support the numerous IDPs who have taken shelter there. This is the second food delivery after a first convoy late April, which had been targeted by small firearms. On the same day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement reminding that the government is considering lifting the Internet shutdown that has been enforced in 8 townships of Rakhine and Chin States for more than a year now. However, such a decision will be conditioned by the local security situation.

## **Shan State**

On 8 July, the Myanmar Army tried to disarm militias in Muse and Mongko areas. In the last few months, we could observe rising tensions between the Myanmar Army and local militias, with the latter accused of involving in illegal businesses and of harbouring criminals. As a result, several armed groups in Muse and Mongko areas have been banned to carry weapons when travelling outside of their control areas since April. Likewise, the Tatmadaw has cracked down upon the Kaungkha militia in Kutkai Township for involving in drug trafficking and allegedly fostering links with the Arakan Army. It has also taken action against the Mongko People’s Militia Force (PMF) for using unregistered weapons. Although PMF in Myanmar enjoy a wide operational autonomy, the Tatmadaw insists on being the only supplier of weapons and ammunitions. The Myanmar Army relies heavily on a complex network of militias, especially in Northern Shan State. It outsources some territorial control to those groups, who are usually former rebel groups which pragmatically chose to align with the government in the 1990s and 2000s.

During the reporting period, concerns have been mounting about tax extortion in Shan State. On 28 June, 3 soldiers of the Shan State Progressive Party / Shan State Army North (SSPP/SSA-N) were reportedly investigated by their organization for levying tax from a KBZ Bank branch in Kyaukme Township in breach of internal procedures. On 11 July, a cement factory in Tachileik Township reported that members of the RCSS/SSA-S had solicited taxes. This assertion was denied by the EAO, which claimed the soldiers involved were from another organization. Tax collection is a major source of income for EAOs and quite systemic in Shan State. The 2015 National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) explicitly bans the signatories from collecting taxes. If those recent accusations are true, the RCSS/SSA-S would therefore action illegally.

During the reporting period, another evidence of armed groups' involvement in the economy surfaced on 12 July in Southern Shan State, when 5 representatives from a coal mining company visited an abbot in Hai Seng village tract (Laikha Township) to convince him to support a controversial mining project rejected by local communities. The project is backed by Wan Pan People's Militia Force (PMF), a Tatmadaw-aligned militia.

In Kyaukme Township, the last two weeks have been marked by local people's protests to demand accountability after a clash between the Myanmar Army and the RCSS/SSA-S. The fight took place on 29 June, in Pan Kyan village, between Kyaukme town and the controversial Upper Yewa dam construction site. On that day, a civilian was killed at short range by Tatmadaw soldiers, two women wounded and a villager beaten up. On the same day, hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Kyaukme as a response, urging the Tatmadaw to take action. On 9 July, the Shan Human Rights Foundation released a report, mapping out quite accurately the clashes on that day and calling the Tatmadaw to take its responsibilities. On the same day, 3 senior Tatmadaw officers launched an investigation on that case, meeting with local people, police officers and medics and pledged to take action if Tatmadaw soldiers were found responsible for those casualties. On 10 July, another protest gathered 10,000 people in Kyaukme. Two leaders were charged for breaching the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful March law. Shan political parties have slammed such a move. On 13 July, 36 Civil Society Organizations demanded sanctions against the Army and asked this case to be solved in a civilian court, and not in a court martial.

### **Kachin State**

On 12 July, the Tatmadaw announced that it led landmine clearance operations in Waingmaw Township from 3 to 11 July on 100 acres of land. This project allowed 98 IDP families return to their village. 5 landmines and 1 grenade were found during the clearance process. This announcement comes two weeks after a statement from the

INGO Fortify Rights, which slammed the regular use of landmines by conflicting parties in Myanmar, and one month after a report by the Mine Risk Working Group (MRWG), which showed that 26 people had been killed and 104 injured by landmines in Myanmar from January to May.

## **Assessment and recommendations**

In spite of the relative lull in armed clashes in the last 6 weeks, the risks in Rakhine and Southern Chin States remain very high. Travel by road should be avoided at all cost. Even major towns' outskirts have become high-risk areas. Awareness and vigilance should be priority before planning or performing any activities in these regions.

In Northern Shan State, no major clash broke out between the Tatmadaw and local EAOs. However, the situation remains volatile. The risks are therefore very high, especially in Kyaukme, Kutkai and Muse areas, and we advise our clients to avoid the area.

EXERA remains at your disposition to offer tailor-made security diagnostics and secure travel plans throughout Myanmar.

## **SOCIAL STABILITY**

Although no demonstration can normally be held in Myanmar at the moment because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recent economy downturn is also a factor of risk. Indeed, the activities slowdown has fragilized whole swathes of the population.

According to a poll led by the Myanmar Marketing Research and Development (MMRD), 90 % of Myanmar businesses report a marked drop of activity due to the pandemic. One of the most impacted sectors is the Cut, Make and Pack industry (CMP), i.e. the garment industry. According to the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers' Association (MGMA), orders have decreased by half compared to last year; 100 factories have closed, leaving 30,000 people unemployed. In Shwe Pyi Thar industrial zone alone, 5 foreign managers have left their factories without paying their staff, fuelling concern and resentment.

This crisis is to some relative extent cushioned by the government, which has earmarked more than 100 billion MMK (71.4 million USD) to support almost 3,400 companies. However, large swathes of the economy and of the population remain off the scope of that plan.

## ELECTION WATCH

On 8 November 2020, Myanmar will hold its general elections. In Myanmar, the general elections take place every five years. The 34 million of Myanmar voters choose their representatives at the Upper House and Lower House of the Parliament<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2008 Constitution, on top of those elected members, those two chambers comprise 25 % of MPs directly appointed by the Senior-General of the Tatmadaw. The Constitution can be amended only if more than 75 % of the MPs agree for it, which gives the Army a decisive veto.

The elected and appointed members of the two chambers (664 members) elect the President of the Republic. The latter is therefore not elected directly by the Myanmar citizens, but indirectly, through the Parliament.

The two main parties in Myanmar are the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a military-aligned party which used to rule the country from 2011 to 2016. In 2015, the NLD won 78 % of the elected seats nationwide. However, because of the 25 % of military appointed in the Parliament, this landslide results in 59 % of the total seats.

97 parties ready to contest the 2020 elections; 79 will run nationwide, 18 will focus on one specific State or Regions. NLD is not expected to fare as good as in 2015, and observers consider it is very unlikely to get the majority at the Parliament. It will therefore have to make alliances, possibly with ethnic parties, which may have a decisive influence in the next tenure.

During the reporting period, the main news about the elections were the following:

- 1) 9 July, Kachin State: the vice chairman of the Kachin State People's Party (KSPP) lamented about the difficulties of leading campaign in the Covid-19 context: travel restrictions, ban of mass gatherings, etc. He pointed out that those constraints are more likely to impact small parties than the major political players. He therefore questioned the transparency and fairness of the poll.
- 2) 12 July, Southern Shan State: the Pa-O National Organization (PNO) decided to contest 34 constituencies. The PNO is a strong party in Southern Shan State, backed up by the pro-government Pa-O National Army. In the 2015 elections, the party won 3 seats in Lower House, 1 seat in Upper House at Union level, as well as 6 seats in the Shan State Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> They also cast their votes for regional functions: their representative at their respective Regional/State Parliament ; their representative at the municipal level ; ethnic minorities can elect their representatives in the regional government if their ethnic group accounts for more than 0.1 % of the regional population. In Self-Administered Zones (SAZ), people also elect the local administrators.

- 3) 12 July, Nay Pyi Taw: the NLD announced it would field more than 2,000 candidates for the election, both for Union-level or regional level. Among the NLD top leaders, U Win Myint has already announced he would run for Tamwe constituency. As for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, she was elected in Kawhmu constituency in 2015, but it appears that Kyi Kyi Win, another NLD candidate, will run for this constituency in 2020. Speculations have run high about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's candidature in Ottathiri Township (Nay Pyi Taw), but NLD officials have denied to confirm them.
- 4) The UEC confirmed the guidelines for advance voting, for voters who would be out of their respective constituencies on the polling day, especially for the 4 million of Myanmar migrant workers abroad. Voters have to register between 16 July and 5 August. The advance vote will take place between 8 and 21 October. In 2015, only 30,000 migrant workers could cast their votes. For 2020 elections, some associations of migrant workers have pointed out the complexity of the registration system, and dreaded that many people may be left out of the process.
- 5) 13 July, Rakhine State: the Arakan National Party (ANP) refused the resignation submitted by 10 senior members for Ramree, Sittwe, Buthidaung, Rathedaung and Kyaukphyu Townships. The ANP stated that no resignation would be accepted until the elections. The party General Secretary also stated that election campaign would be very challenging in Rakhine State, because of the ongoing conflict and the suspension of Internet. As his Kachin counterpart, he put into question the transparency of the poll.
- 6) 13 July, Ayeyarwaddy Region: the NLD Central Executive Committee dismissed 21 NLD members in Wakema Township. They reportedly breached the party discipline.
- 7) 13 July, Nay Pyi Taw: the spokesperson for NLD doubled up on the party's recent confident statements. According to him, the NLD research team found out that the party may win by a landslide in the 7 Regions of Myanmar and get good scores in ethnic States, thus allowing the party to form a self-standing government. This statement stands in contrast with assessments made by several Myanmar journalists and analysts, who consider that the NLD may lose ground in the country's peripheries and may have to form a coalition to govern.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Main Incidents

Based on the main media, notable road accidents since the last report include:

N°	Date and time	Location	Incident	Casualties
1	8 July, 01:00 Hrs	Yangon Region, Mingalardon Township	Car accident	6 people died
2	8 July	Sagaing Region, Monywa – Mandalay Highway	Car crash	1 dead, 2 injured
3	9 July	Yangon Region, Thingangyun Township	YBS bus accident	-
4	10 July	Yangon Region, Mingalar Taung Nyunt Township	YBS bus accident	3 people got injured
5	10 July	Magway Region, Aung Lan – Pyay Highway at milepost 207/5	A truck slipped and overturned	-
6	11 July, 09:55 Hrs	Magway Region, Magway Myothit – Naypyitaw Highway near milepost 73/2	A car overturned	-
7	11 July, 20:00 Hrs	Mandalay Region, Pyin Oo Lwin Township at milepost 19/3	A truck fell down in a ravine due to brake system failure	2 dead
8	12 July, 04:20 Hrs	Yangon Region, Hlegu Township, Yangon – Bago Highway	Car crash	-
	12 July	Shan State (South), Heho – Taunggyi Union Highway between mileposts 92/6 and 92/7	Motorcycle crash	2 injured
9	13 July, 11:03 Hrs	Kachin State, Mohnyin Township	Car accident	1 injured
10	13 July, 08:10 Hrs	Kayin State, Kawkaik – Myawaddy Highway	Car crash	-
11	14 July	Shan State (South) Aung Ban Town	Car accident	1 injured

## Comments and recommendations

Road accidents are a major risk in Myanmar, and one has to be extremely careful. The Yangon – Mandalay Highway is especially dangerous. In 2019, there was a total of 524 accidents on that road, killing 108 people and injuring 1,019 others. During the first half of 2020, 183 accidents occurred, killing 35 people and injuring 2020 others. Among other risks, Yangon – Mandalay highway is made of cement, which is known to wear out tyres much faster than macadam. If you often drive on that road, monitor closely the wear and tear of your tyres.

As a rule, avoid speeding, even on good roads. Keep your distances, keep clear from motorbikes and be careful of light vehicles or cattle on the road. Do not assume other drivers have a good command of their vehicles, the right reflexes and know the traffic rules. Make sure to use properly-trained drivers and well-maintained vehicles. Always fasten your seat belt.

At night, keep in mind that many vehicles, especially motorbikes, drive without any light; drive slowly and be extremely cautious. Accidents are even more frequent during rainy season. Assess road and climate conditions before starting your trip.

## CRIME AND ACCIDENTS

### Main Incidents

Based on the main Myanmar media, notable crimes since the last report include:

- 1) 9 July – Kachin State: a Chinese national sentenced to 13 years in jail for drug offenses escaped during hospitalization in Bhamo Hospital.
- 2) 10 July – Kayin State: the dead body of a missing student was found at Mount Zwegabin.
- 3) 10 July – Thai – Myanmar Border: 11 Myanmar nationals without legal travelling documents were arrested by the Thai police when trying to cross the border illegally.
- 4) 12 July – Tanintharyi Region: 2 people were shot to death by an unknown man in a village in Dawei Township.
- 5) 12 July – Mae Sot: 16 Chinese workers were arrested by Thai authorities while trying to cross Thai border illegally. They claimed to be working in illegal casinos operated by the Kayin Border Guard Force (BGF). The armed organization has denied such accusations.
- 6) 13 July – Rakhine State: a village administrator in Sittwe Township was attacked and burned with fuel. He was hospitalized at Sittwe Hospital.
- 7) 13 July – Sagaing Region: 2 girls were stabbed to death at a village in Indaw Township.

## Comments and recommendations

As a rule, take the usual precautions: do not carry large amounts of cash; be cautious when you withdraw money at the bank or when you step out of a money changer; avoid ostentatious displays of wealth in a public area; avoid routine times and routine routes in the matter of going-out from your apartment or house.

We encourage you to be extremely careful when travelling, especially in industrial zones and poor neighbourhoods: keep your doors locked, make sure you are not followed, attract attention or take shelter if you have any doubt.

## TRAFFICKING

### Main incidents

- 1) 7 July, Southern Shan State: the authority in Hsi Hseng Township arrested a motorbike driver transporting 4,000 amphetamine tablets, with a value of 4 million kyat (\$ 2,900).
- 2) 8 July, Mandalay Region: security forces guarding the road between Yeywa and Pyinsar villages found 142,500 amphetamine tablets and 1 kg of methamphetamine inside of an abandoned bag. The illegal drugs value was estimated at 440 million kyats (\$ 320,000).
- 3) 8 July, Northern Shan State: anti-heroin squad stopped a car on the way between Kutkai and Tarmoenye and found 222,000 amphetamine tablets, with a value of 400 million kyats (\$ 290,000).
- 4) 9 July, Eastern Shan State: the Tachileik township authorities found a car and 3 dead bodies near the Myanmar - Lao border, as well 4 million Thai baht and many millions of Chinese yuan. The dead are thought to be working for a local casino on the Lao side of the border.
- 5) 9 July, Northern Shan State: acting on a tip-off, Laukkai township police raided a house and found 61,000 amphetamine tablet, heroin amphetamine precursors. The overall value of the drugs was 1 billion MMK (\$728,000).
- 6) 9 July, Northern Shan State: joint security forces in Naung Cho Township found 800,000 amphetamine tablets and 26 kg of heroin in a truck, for a total value of 16.8 billion MMK, i.e. \$ 12 million. Two people were arrested.

- 7) 9 July, Mon State: one member from Myanmar Army was wounded when the army raided a house in Ye township. This raid followed a first seizure on 7 July.
- 8) 9 July, Northern Shan State: the authority stopped a car transporting 30 kg of methamphetamine between Mongyai and Lashio, for a total value of 600 million MMK, i.e. \$ 437,000. The two people on board were arrested.
- 9) 9 July, Eastern Shan State: Tachileik township authorities stopped a car transporting 300,000 amphetamine tablets in Wong Mai village, with a value of 45 million kyat (USD \$ 328,000). The driver was arrested.
- 10) 9 July, Myanmar – Bangladesh border: 3 Bengali/Rohingya were killed and 2 Bangladesh Border Guard officers were wounded during a clash between alleged drug traffickers and police.
- 11) 10 July, Eastern Shan State: Mong Hsat township authorities found 4 kilo of amphetamines, 159.6 kilo of caffeine and 2554 litres of precursors, for a total value of 4.1 million MMK, i.e. \$ 29,000.
- 12) 12 July, Eastern Shan State: acting on a tip-off, an anti-heroin squad arrested a man transporting 8,000 amphetamine tablets, for a total value of 12 million MMK (\$ 8,700).
- 13) 12 July, Rakhine State: the authorities found 13,6610 amphetamine tablets in a car at an army checkpoint in Gyi Kan Pyin village (Maungdaw Township). The value of the seizure was estimated at 273 million MMK (\$ 198,000). The driver was arrested, and after interrogation, another person was arrested.

On another note, Myanmar intelligence sources confirmed that the 33 war weapons seized by Thai forces in Mae Sot were destined to Rakhine State. Those weapons belonged to the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), a Myanmar EAO and ceasefire signatory. The investigation highlights transborder flows and expansive smuggling networks. It also highlights the challenges that the Arakan Army faces to procure weapons. Contrarily to EAOs operating in Shan State, the AA cannot rely on weapons smuggled from China or produced by well-established EAOs in Myanmar. Its very geographical isolation is a logistic challenge.

On 8 July, the Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its dismay to see that the 2020 Trafficking in Persons report, recently released by the US Department of State, puts Myanmar on the third (and lowest) tier in its global ranking for human trafficking. According to the Myanmar statement, this does not reflect the efforts made by the Aung San Suu Kyi government since 2016.

## Comments and recommendations

Do not indulge in any drug-related activities in Myanmar, even for recreational and private purpose. It is against the law and can yield every heavy sentences. Northern, Eastern Shan State, as well as Rakhine State are major drug hubs; this can result in violent disputes between traffickers or violent arrests. Extra precaution should be taken when visiting those areas.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

### Earthquakes

#### Main incidents

Myanmar is located on the active Sagaing seismic fault line and is therefore vulnerable to earthquakes. Since our previous report on 9 July 2020, 6 earthquakes have been measured, but no fatality and injury has been reported:

Date	Location	Magnitude	Damages and casualties
10 July	Sagaing Region	4.0	-
12 July	Magway Region	3.5	-
13 July	Magway Region	4.0	-
13 July	Magway Region	3.7	-
14 July	Sagaing Region	4.1	-
15 July	Mandalay Region	3.5	-

#### Comments and recommendations

Be aware that Myanmar is a seismic country and prepare yourself accordingly. Try to settle down your accommodation or your office in recent, well-built buildings. Adapt the common earthquakes reaction tips to your environment. Keep a survival kit at home and in your office, within reach. Spread those instructions to your family and in your work environment.

## Fire breakouts

### Main incidents

Based on the main Myanmar media, the most significant fire since the last report are the following:

N°	Date and time	Location	Event	Casualties and damages
1	10 July 2020, 04:07 Hrs	Yangon Region, Shwepyitha Township	Factory fire	-
2	11 July, 2020, 14:10 Hrs	Kachin State, Hpakhant Township	Car fire	-
3	12 July 2020, 14:30 Hrs	Sagaing Region, Tigyaing Township	Rubbish fire	-
4	12 July 2020, 14:45 Hrs	Kachin State, Myitkyina Town	House fire	-
5	12 July 2020, 18:05 Hrs	Sagaing Region, Banmauk Township	House fire	-
6	13 July 2020, 05:15 Hrs	Bago Region, Pyay Township	Motorcycle fire	-
7	13 July 2020, 11:52 Hrs	Yangon Region, Shwe Pauk Kan Township	House fire	-
8	14 July 2020, 02:48 Hrs	Kachin State, Putao Town	House fire	-

### Comments and recommendations

Myanmar legal system may hold you responsible for accidental fire and yield heavy sentences. It is therefore necessary to take precautions. Make sure your office or your accommodation comply to satisfactory electric norms and are fitted with a fire alarm; make sure they have a proper and clear evacuation route; equip yourself with fire-extinguishing devices; be extremely careful when dealing with candles.

## Health Hazards

### Current situation

The sanitary situation in Myanmar is still dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR), the figure for 8 July at 08:00 hrs was 316 confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 17 more than the previous week.

As of 15 July, at 08:00 Hrs, 337 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 21 new cases in the last week. All of them came back from other countries: 7 from India, 4 from Thailand, 3 from Philippines, 3 from Bangladesh, 2 from UK, 1 from USA and 1 from UAE. They were repatriated by government-arranged relief flights, put in quarantine on arrival on Myanmar, and tested while in quarantine. In other words, in those specific cases, contamination chains were somehow under control.

MoHS statistics indicate that the number of positive patients went through a sustained growth in the first 3 weeks of April, before reaching a plateau. Since mid-May, the increase of new figures has been chiefly driven by imported cases: from 16 May to 15 July at 08:00 hrs, 156 new cases were confirmed, out of which 151 imported cases: 60 Myanmar nationals back from India, 29 from Thailand, 17 from Malaysia, 14 from UAE, 15 from Bangladesh, 4 from UK, 3 from Qatar, 3 from Philippines, 2 from Italy, 1 from Laos, 1 from Singapore, 1 from China and 1 from USA. The high amount of people tested positive while in quarantine suggests that quarantine facilities themselves may be active clusters. This raises the question as to whether quarantine facilities can efficiently contain the epidemic.

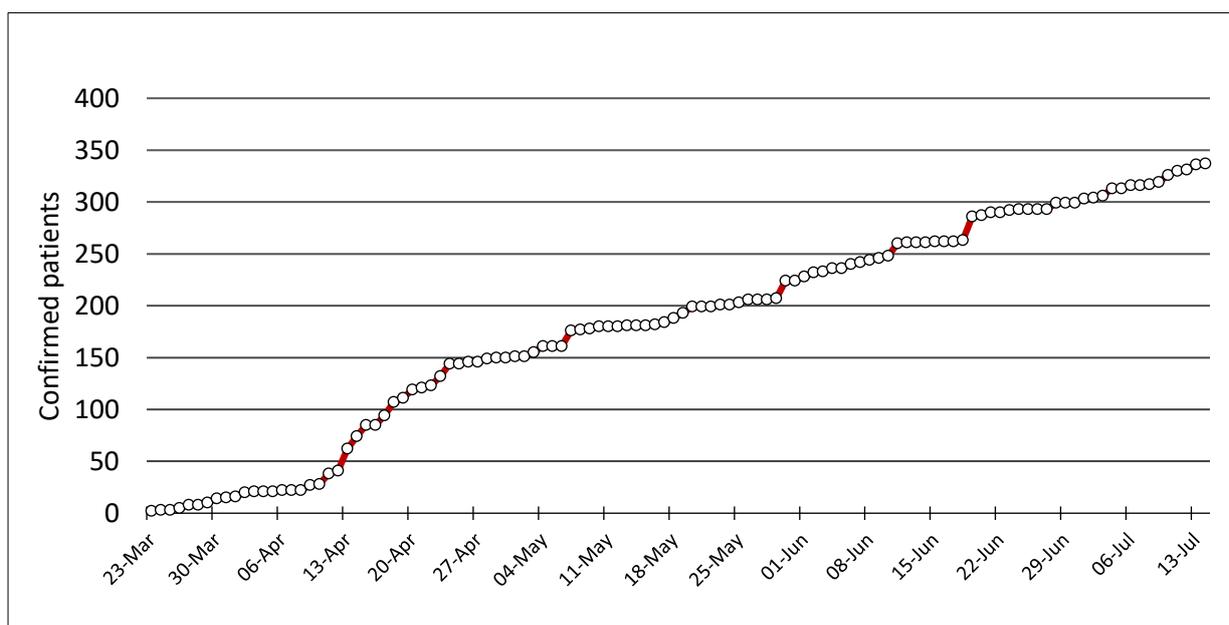


Figure 2: Total Covid-19 cases in Myanmar since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. Source: MoHS

More than 180,000 Myanmar nationals have been repatriated from abroad since the beginning of the crisis, out of whom 70,000 from Thailand. Repatriation was also operated by flight: as of 14 July, Myanmar had repatriated a total of 7,677 people by special relief flights. With the resumption of classes in Myanmar, 6,000 quarantine facilities set up in schools had to be closed, thereby limiting the number of beds in official quarantine facilities. Because of that bottleneck, the number of repatriates

who can be flown back to Myanmar is now limited at 700 per week, according to the Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin.

As of 15 July 2020, at 08:00 hrs, MoHS has tested a total of 97,047 people since the beginning of the epidemic. Since the publication of the latest WSR, 9,899 people have been tested, i.e. an average of 692 per day. At the beginning of the epidemic, Myanmar was notorious for its very low number of tests, as it did not have any suitable testing lab; since then, it has increased its capacities, with 5 labs and more systematic testing. On 9 July, the MoHS minister stated that 58 % of Covid-19 cases detected in the country were asymptomatic, which emphasizes the importance of sustained sanitary measures.

We suggest being careful of the distinction between:

- the total number of patients since the beginning of the pandemic, which combines active cases, deaths and discharged patients. It is the commonly-used and oft-quoted metric. As of 15 July, at 08:00 hrs, a total of 337 people have been contaminated in the country, out of whom 237 in Yangon Region (i.e. 70 %)
- the current number of active patients, which is the immediate risk indicator. As of 15 July, at 08:00 hrs, there were 70 active patients in the country, out of whom 52 in Yangon Region (i.e. 74 %).

In Yangon, the main clusters are:

Township	Number of cases since the beginning of the epidemic	Number of cases for 10,000 inhabitants
Insein	50	1.64
Hlaing	24	1.50
Botahtaung	22	5.37
Mayangone	19	0.96
Dagon Myothit (South)	15	0.40
South Okkalapa	13	3.2
Dagon Myothit (North)	12	0.26
Tamwe	10	0.61

As a comparison, EU countries had an average of 3.6 positive cases for 10,000 inhabitants as of 25 March, at the peak of the epidemic. It must be noted that the

high number of patients in Hlaing, Botahtaung, Mayangone, Dagon Myothit North and South Townships is mainly ascribable to returnees flown back to Myanmar from abroad and tested positive while in quarantine. In other words, they did not live in their home townships when they got infected.

Outside of Yangon Region, the most affected States/Regions of Myanmar since the beginning of the epidemic are:

1. Kayin State, with 26 cases, mostly due to returnees from Thailand
2. Rakhine State with 14 cases
3. Chin State with 11 cases
4. Sagaing Region with 9 cases
5. Bago (West) Region with 9 cases

The set of preventive decisions that had been made by the authorities in March and April had already been extended several times (15 May, 28 May and 12 June). On 13 July evening, it was again extended until 31 July.

The current situation is the following:

- 1) The prohibition of gatherings of more than 5 people has been relaxed since late May. Gatherings are allowed in the following contexts:
  - governmental departments, organizations, companies, factories and workshops
  - in public, private and monastic schools
  - meetings, discussions and classes at governmental departments, organizations, companies, factories and workshops in accordance to the health ministry guidelines
  - food shops which have been allowed to re-open as they follow the ministry's guidelines
  - essential sectors described in the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population's May 3 -notice.

Mass gatherings such as marriages, festivals, demonstrations, rallies and conferences remain tightly restricted.

- 1) International commercial flights, as well as the issuance of any kind of visa remain suspended until 31 July at 23:59 hrs Myanmar time. Moreover, the reporting period was marked by reactions to Vice-President Henry Van Thio's announcement made on 9 July. According to him, commercial international flights might remain banned until 1 October 2020, with possible resumption of flights afterwards, mainly with ASEAN countries, within "travel bubbles" gathering countries with the same sanitary situation. This announcement has fuelled concern within the business sector, and especially in the tourism sector, which stakeholders dread an economic collapse. The flows of

international flights to/from Yangon International Airport has dropped by 85 % since the beginning of the epidemic, and the flows of passengers by 96 %.

The MoHS recently announced that the National Health Laboratory (NHL) is now able to provide travel-fit certificates for urgent overseas travel. The test can be done in one day and costs 200,000 MMK (i.e. \$ 150). The applicants have to submit their request at NHL between 9:30 hrs and 11:00 and must present their passports flight tickets. Such a procedure can support people taking special flights out of the country or the few remaining outbound flights to Korea or Japan.

- 2) A curfew remains enforced from midnight to 04.00 Hrs.
- 3) Wearing facial mask in public spaces remains compulsory.
- 4) On 30 June, the Thai authorities announced it would open its 37 border posts with neighbouring countries on 1 July. Myanmar shares 8 passage points with Thailand. However, tourists are still barred from crossing the borders.
- 5) Since 1 July, and the lifting of the semi-lockdown orders in Insein Township, no more township is under restrictive orders in Myanmar.

### **Comments and recommendations**

Although the epidemic seems to be receding in Myanmar, precaution level should remain high. Indeed, other countries, especially in Latin America and Africa, are yet to reach the contamination peak, while the epidemic bounces back in some Asian and European countries. On 30 June, a doctor who had been tested positive on Tachileik (Shan State) in April and declared cured in May was tested positive again to Covid-19. This raises the question of Covid-19 immunity and its duration.

We advise you to carefully follow the official instruction and orders:

- wear facial mask in public spaces: although many people tend to give up masks, it remains a compulsory requirement on the streets and on buses.
- Abide by the curfew rules, from midnight to 4 am.

According to the spokesperson of the President Office U Zaw Htay, 8,470 people have been sued from late March to late June for breaching the Covid-19 protection rules.

More generally, we invite you to follow the usual precautionary measures:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Practice social distancing: maintain at least 2-meter (6 feet) distance with any other people.
- Avoid crowded places and public gatherings.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Practice respiratory hygiene: wear face mask as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the used tissue immediately. Make sure the people around you also follow those good practices.
- Stay home as much as possible. Whether you live in a semi-lockdown area or not, limit your movements to the most necessary tasks.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, do not rush to medical facilities, as it may contribute to the propagation of the epidemic. Inform the medical authorities beforehand.
- Stay informed about the latest developments and follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your local and national public health authorities or your employer.

Those precautions should be followed even more closely by people living in cluster areas where Covid-19 is especially active, who visited such regions in the last two weeks, or who have been in contact with a confirmed case.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

AA: Arakan Army

ALP: Arakan Liberation Party

ANP: Arakan National Party

ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

DHRP: Democracy and Human Rights Party

ICOE: Independent Commission of Enquiry

IED: Improvised Explosive Device

ICJ: International Court of Justics

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

EAO: Ethnic Armed Organization

JMC: Joint Monitoring Committee

KDA: Kachin Defense Army

KIA: Kachin Independence Army

KNDP: Karen National Democratic Party

KNLA: Karen National Liberation Army

KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party

KNU: Karen National Union

MMT: Myanmar Time

MNDAA: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

MoHS: Ministry of Health and Sports

NCA: National Ceasefire Agreement

NLD: National League for Democracy

NMSP: New Mon State Party

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Khaplang

RCSS: Restoration Council of Shan State

SNA: Shanni Nationalities Army

SSA-N: Shan State Army - North

SSA-S: Shan State Army – South

SSPP: Shan State Progressive Party

TNLA: Ta'ang National Liberation Army

UNWFP: United Nations World Food Programme

UNWHO: United Nations World Health Organization

USDP: Union Solidarity and Development Party

UWSA: United Wa State Army

WSR: Weekly Security Review

ZCD: Zomi Congress for Democracy

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