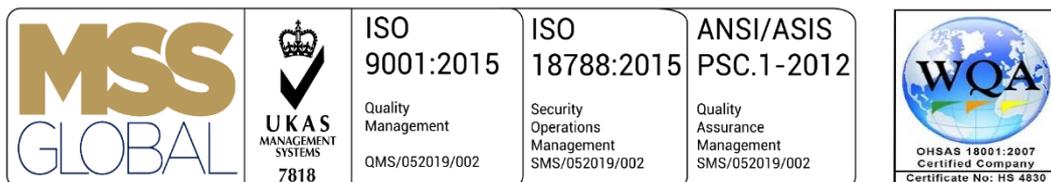


# EXERA

## Weekly Security Review

Safety and Security Highlights for Clients Operating in Myanmar

Dates covered: 18 June– 24 June 2020



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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY****Covid -19 pandemic**

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR) on 18 June 2020 at 10:50 hrs, Myanmar had had a total of 262 Covid-19 patients since the beginning of the pandemic, i.e. 16 more than the previous week.

As of 24 June, at 08:00 Hrs, 292 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 30 new cases in the last week. 29 of them are imported cases; those patients came back from Thailand, Qatar and Bangladesh; they were tested positive while in quarantine. The 30<sup>th</sup> case is a local patient, who had been in contact with a patient back from Bangladesh.

Current government restrictions, among which the suspension of all commercial international flights, will remain enforced until 30 June. It is still unknown whether they will be lifted on 1 July or extended. More information should surface in the next few days.

**Internal Conflict**

In Rakhine State, the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army remains at a moderate level, with fewer frontal clashes than in April – May. The main incidents happened in Rathedaung Township, with an ambush on a Border Guard Police convoy and a rocket attack on a Navy ship. Tension remains high: security forces arrest numerous villagers and block food supplies to dozens of villages; civilians get killed or injured by landmine blasts. The humanitarian situation is therefore getting concerning. On the ground, more village administrators resign, widening the local political vacuum. On 19 June, activists and international community commemorated the first anniversary of Internet shutdown in 9 townships in Rakhine and Southern Chin States.

Meanwhile, conflict is increasing in Northern Shan State, and especially between Kutkai area. Regular clashes pit the Tatmadaw and the Northern Alliance, comprising the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Arakan Army (AA). Noticeably, the reporting period saw the involvement of the KIA, a major member of the alliance that had remained off the conflict until then. This might signal a return of the whole alliance to the fore, and the resumption of widescale conflict in Northern Shan State. A KIA representative warned local residents they should get ready for such a possibility. The regional military landscape is made even more complex by the intervention of the Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan

State Army South (RCSS/SSA-S), a former rebel group which now encroaches on TNLA's territory, reportedly with the support of the Tatmadaw.

## **Drugs**

As in previous weeks, the Myanmar authorities performed massive seizures, especially in Shan State. This reminds of the magnitude of drug production and trafficking in Myanmar. On 22 June, the Myanmar authorities held a drug burning ceremony near Kutkai. They burnt nearly 3.4 billion MMK worth of drugs seized in the last weeks, i.e. 2.3 million USD.

## **Election Watch**

For our first special Election Watch, two well-known parties entered the election fray, with the People's Party, led by democracy activist Ko Ko Gyi, and the Union Betterment Part (UBP), led by the former n°3 of Than Shwe government, Thura U Shwe Mann. Beside those major announcements, several ethnic parties disclosed their ambitions in Kayin, Shan and Kachin States.

**INTERNAL CONFLICT**

During the reporting period, combats concentrated in Rakhine State, between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) and the Arakan Army, and in Northern Shan State, between the Tatmadaw and the Northern Alliance.

**Rakhine State**

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

- 1) 16 June, Mrauk-U Township: a couple from Shwe Kyin Pyin village who went to fetch bamboo in the forest was arrested by the Myanmar Army. Several clashes have taken place in Mrauk-U township, and tension runs high. The Myanmar Army has arrested numerous civilians for suspected link with AA.
- 2) 19 June, Ponnagyun Township: two men riding motorbikes were killed and a woman on a bus was wounded near Kyauk Seik village, when fighting broke out near the highway. That clash disrupted the traffic on Yangon – Sittwe Highway for several hours. During the clash, a house was also destroyed by artillery fire. Some villagers escaped to safety, although most houses have already been vacated by their residents because of frequent incidents. In one of them, 6 villagers were arrested by the army and forced to sit outside under the rain for several hours, before being released. Shortly after the clash, the AA stated the local context and the recent inflow of Tatmadaw troops had forced it into a confrontation in village area. It also stated that although the clash lasted for half an hour, artillery shelling on the village lasted significantly longer. Artillery support was reportedly provided by both ground troops and Navy ships. At least 2 AA fighters were reportedly killed.
- 3) 19 June, Mrauk-U Township: a Myanmar Army convoy was targeted by a remote landmine near Hpon Thar village. After the incident, the road was blocked for several hours.
- 4) 19 June, Ann and Myebon townships: 4 villagers were released from prison after eight months of detention for alleged links with the AA. They were released for lack of evidence. Two of them were from Ann Township (Tha Lu Maw and Yu villages), two from Myebon township (Ah Myet Htwet village). They were part of a group of 10 people arrested in November 2019 and charged under the anti-terrorism law. The six other detainees are still in jail.
- 5) 21 June, Kyauktaw Township: two villagers were wounded when fighting broke out in Ah Pauk Wa village. The clash started at 7: 35 Hrs local time, after a Myanmar Army group was targeted by a remote landmine. It lasted for an hour. Local residents fled to security during the fighting.

- 6) 22 June, Rathedaung Township: three officers of the Border Guard Police (BGP) were killed and 4 others wounded when their convoy of 3 cars was ambushed near Koe Tan Kauk village. One civilian car driver was also killed and one wounded during the clash. The attack took place on the Ah Ngu Maw – Maungdaw road, the main road leading up to Maungdaw Township.
- 7) 22 June, Sittwe Township: 6 people from Aung Din village were arrested by a joint security forces team at 11:00 Hrs. 5 of them were released shortly after, but one remains in detention.
- 8) 23 June, Taungup Township: a villager was arrested by the Tatmadaw in Chet Phaut village, for alleged ties with the AA. A grenade was reportedly found in his belongings.
- 9) 24 June, Rathedaung Township: AA fired rockets to Myanmar Navy ships docked on Mayu river. The attack was initiated at 4:45 Hrs local time, and exchanges of gunfire lasted until 7:00 Hrs. The Myanmar Army artillery fired back onto neighbouring villages, prompting villagers to escape. No information has been provided about the amount of casualties.

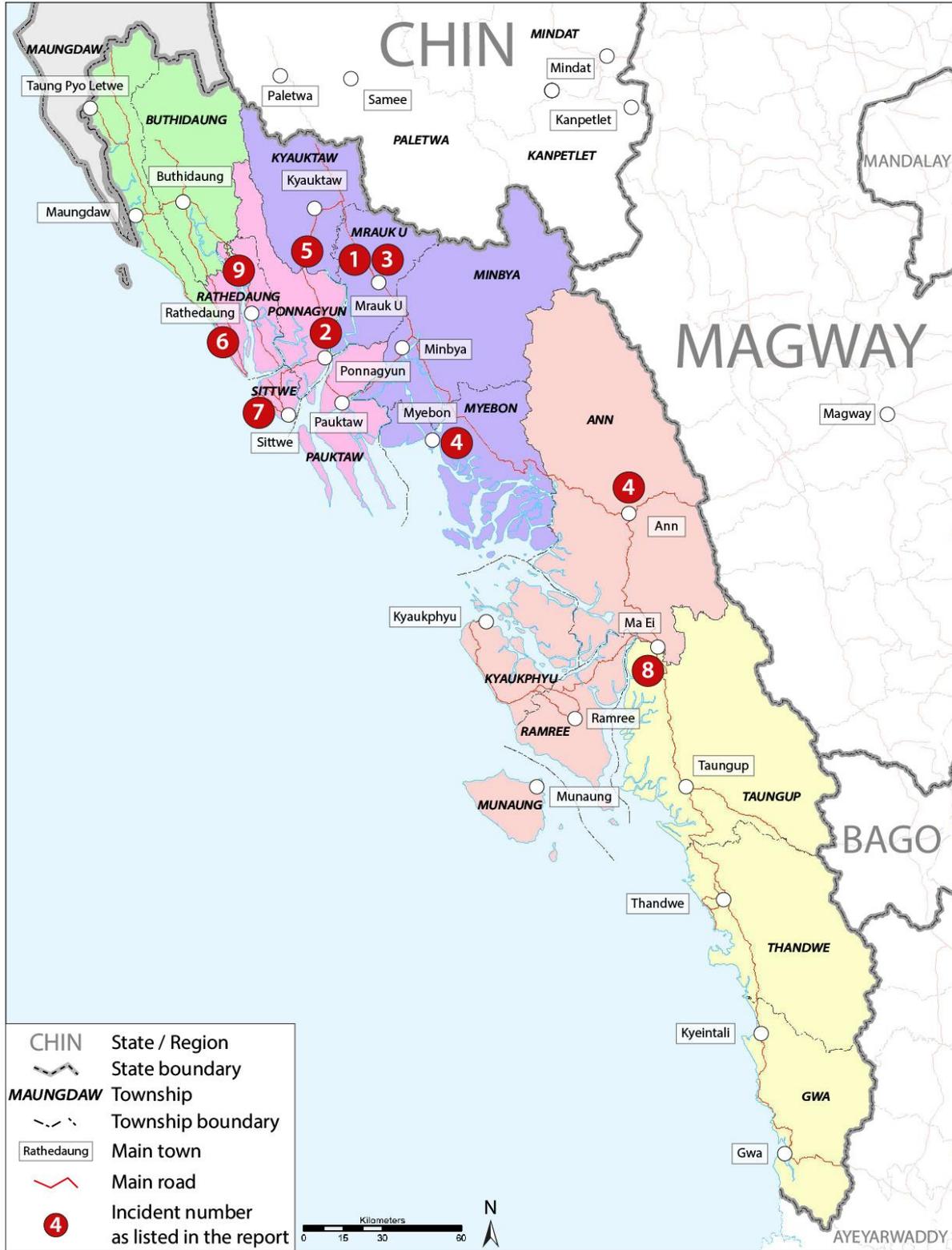


Figure 1: Security incidents in Rakhine State between 18 June and 24 June, 2020.

**Shan State**

In Northern Shan State, tension has markedly increased in June, following the ambush of two Tatmadaw trucks in Kutkai Township on 29 May. Since then, fights have flared up, with Kutkai as an epicentre. Although clashes in the area have usually involved the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), they are now involving the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one of the main EAOs in Myanmar. This may show the return of the Northern Alliance, comprising the KIA, the TNLA, the AA and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA). The main incidents during the reporting period were the following!

- 1) 17 June, Kutkai Township: a clash occurred near Nawng Hpan and Nawng Mau villages, in the vicinity of Nam Hpat Kar town, between the Tatmadaw and the KIA. KIA reported that fighting broke out because Myanmar Army came to attack one of its bases, under KIA brigade 4, battalion 8. Myanmar Army reportedly sustained casualties during the clash.
- 2) 18 June, Kutkai Township: five villagers were arrested by soldiers of Myanmar Army's Infantry Division 88. They were then forced to guide the troops to the frontline. They were arrested at 8:00 Hrs and released at 15:00 Hrs. According to the international laws, such a practice is illegal.
- 3) 19 June, Kutkai Township: fighting broke out in Ja Yan village between TNLA's brigade 1 and Myanmar Army's Light Infantry Division 99 at 14:20 Hrs.
- 4) 19 June, Kyaukme township: a clash pitted TNLA's brigade 2 and Myanmar Army's Infantry Battalion No. 148 in Hosan village, Minelon sub-township.
- 5) 20 June, Kutkai Township: fighting took place between Myanmar Army and TNLA in Pan Ku village. The fighting lasted for half an hour.

Beside those clashes between EAOs and Tatmadaw, some clashes were reported between two rival EAOs: the TNLA and the Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan State Army South (RCSS/SSA-S), a former rebel organization which has drawn quite close to the Tatmadaw since it signed a ceasefire in October 2015. It is even considered as an unofficial pro-government militia by some observers.

- 1) 16-17 June, Kutkai Township: clashes broke out between TNLA and RCSS/SSA-S near Kaleng and Nawng Hpan villages.
- 2) 23 June, Namtu Township: over 200 people fled from three villages to Mann San village because of military tension between TNLA and RCSS/SSA-S.

**Kachin State**

On 22 June, a Covid-19 screening point manned by KIA soldiers was destroyed by the Myanmar Army in Lweje township, near the Myanmar/Chinese border. After that incident, military tension remained very high in the sector.

**Bago Region**

On 17 June, a villager looking for mushroom in the forest was killed by a landmine blast in Kyaukkyi Township, according to the Myanmar Army. The Tatmadaw held some Karen armed groups responsible for the incident. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the only EAO operating in the area. Tensions are still high about a controversial road renovation between Kyaukkyi and Hpapun (Kayin State).

**Kayin State**

On June 19, KNLA's brigade 3, based in Nyaunglaypin Township, issued a statement blaming the Tatmadaw for the destruction of two of its Covid-19 checkpoints, on 2 and 16 June. The statement also emphasizes the KNLA efforts for the welfare of Kayin people and the need for mutual trust between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw.

**Assessment for clash areas**

## 1) Rakhine State

Clashes somehow seem to have receded in June. Simultaneous attacks in several townships, heavy fights involving airstrikes or struggle for major bridges have become a rare occurrence. The conflict seems to be low-burning in several townships which have seen armed conflict since 2018, such as Mrauk U or Kyauktaw. However, one recent trend seems to be the extension of the conflict into southern Rathedaung: the AA attacked a police station in Thazin Myaing late May and in Done Paik on 13 June, and it ambushed a Border Guard Police convoy on 22 June. This might be the first steps of AA incursions towards Maungdaw Township, which has remained marginally impacted by the conflict so far.

In spite of this apparent slowdown, the humanitarian situation remains highly concerning. On 18 June, the Mine Risk Working Group (MRWG) reported that 26 people have been killed and 104 injured by landmines in Myanmar from January to May. 56% of those casualties were reported in Rakhine State. On 20 June, 120 Myanmar civil rights groups asked Myanmar Army to stop military operations in ethnic areas and to refrain from committing any human rights abuses.

On 16 June, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 78,000 people have been displaced by the conflict between Tatmadaw and AA since January 2019. According to the CSO Rakhine Ethnic

Congress, the figure even hits more than 156,000. On 17 June, one IDP camp in Myebon Township was flooded after heavy rainfall, and some people had to be accommodated in a nearby monastery. On 20 June, in Rathedaung Township, Buddhist monks and CSOs went to rescue 54 people trapped by fighting in Tha Mee Hla village, and who were running out of supplies. On 23 June, Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) reported that over 12,000 people in Ann township are now facing food shortage as ground and water ways have been blocked by the Myanmar Army since 17 June. Humanitarian organizations are also denied any access to the area.

Those cases highlight the importance of civil society and religious organizations in humanitarian affairs, advocacy and resilience, at a time when the political vacuum in Rakhine State is getting ever wider. On 17 June, the last remaining village and ward administrators in Myebon Township resigned. Late May, 3 village leaders had been arrested; on 5 June, 62 resigned to express their opposition; since then, others have followed, and on 17 June, the last of the 73 village and ward leaders resigned. This trend is concerning: as Dr Min Zaw Oo, executive director of the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security highlights, AA may seize this opportunity to push his supporters to replace those village leaders; on the other hand, the Myanmar authorities may give administrative control to the Tatmadaw.

Although the farming season is starting, many villagers are not able to farm their fields. In Kyauktaw Township, villagers from Ah Pauk Wa do not dare going to their fields, for fear of being arrested by the Tatmadaw or shot in crossfires, as it happened on 21 June. Last year, 50,000 acres of paddy fields had to be left fallow in Rakhine State because of the conflict.

One of the key events during the reporting period took place on 19 June, with the first anniversary of the current Internet blackout in Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk U, Minbya and Myebon townships in Rakhine State, as well as Paletwa township in Chin State. This blackout had been lifted in Maungdaw Township on 3 June. On 19 June, the UN Human Rights Office for South-East Asia and many civil right groups in Myanmar urged the government to end this shutdown in Rakhine and Chin States, arguing that it puts civilian lives at risk, while also hindering accountability about local military operations.

The 2016-2017 waves of violence against Bengali/Rohingya in Rakhine State also came back to the fore during the reporting period. On 18 June, the AA released a video footage of one of its prisoners, Tatmadaw Captain Nyi Nyi Zaw, arrested on a passenger ferry on October 2019. On that video, he confesses killing 3 men suspected to be militants of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) near Zin Pai Nyar village, in September 2017. Tatmadaw spokesperson Brig-General Zaw Min Tun denied allegation for the killing, and accused AA of forcing Captain Nyi Nyi Zaw into fake confessions.

On 22 June, Myanmar rejected the draft resolution on "Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar" tabled by the European Union, at the 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Myanmar ambassador at the UN stated that

domestic criminal justice mechanism had already been enforced, following the recommendations of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE). Despite those objections, the draft resolution was adopted, with 37 countries voting in favour, 2 against and 8 abstentions.

All in all, across Rakhine State and Southern Chin State, the risk remains very high.

## 2) Northern Shan State

The recent weeks have seen a clear increase of tension in Northern Shan State. Although the Tatmadaw and the Northern Alliance have both extended their respective unilateral ceasefires, the latter have lost most of their meanings. Clashes are getting more and more frequent, and troops flow into the area. It is estimated that the Myanmar Army has deployed 2,500 fighters from Light Infantry Division 88 and 99. On 18 June, the KIA warned Northern Shan State residents that full-fledged conflict may resume, especially in Kutkai area. Recent clashes, and especially the involvement of the KIA, which was long the least-active member of the Northern Alliance, may trigger a resurrection of the Alliance. The civilian population is facing increasing hardships: in a context still marked by the Covid-19 epidemic, villagers flee their villages to take shelter in IDP camps in Kutkai, and others do not dare farming their fields for fear of clashes or arrests.

The security situation is made even more complex by the intervention of the RCSS/SSA-S which, in spite of intermittent skirmishes with the Tatmadaw, operates in favour of it. Although it is usually based in Kyaukme Township, local sources notes that it is now moving northwards towards Kutkai. If the EAO managed to settle down in that region for the long run, it may severely disrupt the troop movements of the Northern Alliance.

After several months at “high”, the risk has increased in Northern Shan State, and we now rate it as very high, especially between Lashio and Muse.

## Comments and recommendations

Travel by road should be avoided at all cost in Northern and Central Rakhine State as well as in Southern Chin State. Even major towns’ outskirts have become high-risk areas. Awareness and vigilance should be priority before planning or performing any activities in these regions. Considering the incidents in Kutkai area, we also advise our clients to avoid the region for the moment. EXERA remains at your disposition to offer tailor-made security diagnostics and secure travel plans throughout Myanmar.

## SOCIAL STABILITY

No demonstration can legally be held in Myanmar at the moment because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the wake of the commemoration of the first anniversary of the

Rakhine Internet shutdown, 6 activists were charged across Myanmar for breaching the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law: one was arrested in Ramree Township, and five in Yangon, while trying to hang posters on a sky bridge in downtown Yangon. If found guilty, they may be sentenced to one month in jail.

On 18 June, Facebook announced it had deleted more than 51,000 hate messages in Myanmar in the quarter of 2020. This highlights at the same time a clear increase of Facebook capacities to regulate its contents and the potential threat of hate speech in Myanmar, just months before the general elections.

The recent economy downturn due to the epidemic is also a factor of risk. Indeed, it has fragilized whole swathes of the population. Although the situation is currently getting back on track, and although many factories reopen, low level opportunistic crime is set to remain high in the near future.

## ELECTION WATCH

In November 2020, Myanmar will hold its general elections. The specific date is yet to be announced by the Union Election Commission. In Myanmar, the general elections take place every five years. Myanmar people vote for 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. Myanmar is extremely diverse from a political point of view, with almost 100 parties ready to contest the 2020 elections.

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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.

With the elections getting closer, several announcements have recently made the headlines:

- 1) On June 16, 30 political parties, including the USDP, released a statement to criticize the method chosen by the NLD to select its candidates. More specifically, they challenged the involvement of “town elders” within the selection committees, even though their arguments remains unclear.
- 2) On 17 June, the People’s Party called the members of the “1988 generation” and all political generations to run for elections under its colours. It also mentioned it is currently ready to field more than 100 candidates for the elections.

The People’s Party was founded in August 2018 by democracy activists who were among the leaders of the 8 August 1988 student protests. This “8888 generation” long remained at odds with the mainstream Myanmar political parties. After the 2015 elections, they decided to found their own party. It is chaired by well-known democracy figure U Ko Ko Gyi. Its agenda is pro-democracy, with an emphasis on alliances with ethnic parties.



*Credit: Straits Times*

- 3) On June 18, the vice chairman for ethnic Kayin People’s Party (KPP) stated that his party is calling potential candidates to contest upcoming election under its elections, and to register by the end of this month. KPP will contest election in Thandaunggyi Township (Kayin State), Yangon, Ayeyarwaddy, Bago, Mon and Tanintharyi Regions.
- 4) On June 18, Thura U Shwe Mann, chairman of the Union Betterment Party (UBP) stated that his party will contest the elections in 255 of the 330 townships in Myanmar. He said he expected to win 40 % of the townships its party would run for. He does not expect the NLD to win the same landslide victory as in 2015, and considers his party is in good position to make a

coalition government with the NLD. On top of the Union level, its party will also run for local legislature. In total, it should field 900 candidates in total. He expected that his party will win 40 percent from those 255 townships from election.

The Union Betterment Party was founded in February 2019. It is therefore a newcomer in the Myanmar political landscape. It was founded by Thura U Shwe Mann, a heavyweight of Myanmar politics. He served for almost 40 years in the Myanmar Army, reaching the rank of Lieutenant-General. In the 2000s, he was the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important figure of the military junta led by Senior-General Than Shwe. In 2010, he retired and engaged in politics, and became the USDP Chairman. He has cultivated a certain understanding with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. This proximity was criticized by USDP hardliners. Some observers consider this may be the reason why he was ousted from USDP Chairmanship in August 2015. Although he lost the MP seat he was running for under USDP colours during the 2015 elections, the NLD appointed him Head of the Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues at the Union Parliament.

The UBP agenda is yet to be clearly defined. It appears as a pro-democracy, NLD-compatible party. Thura U Shwe Mann stands out as a character of compromise, a softliner able to bridge the gap between the Military and the pro-democracy parties. Although the performance of his party in November elections is still uncertain, he is expected to keep a prominent role in Myanmar politics in the future.

Credit: [www.mizzima.com](http://www.mizzima.com)

- 5) On 20 June, Sai Aik Pao, the chairman of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) said that his party would contest seats everywhere in Shan State, as well as positions of ethnic representatives in Kachin State's and Mandalay Region's government. The SNDP, which runs with a pro-ethnic agenda, plans to field 58 candidates, among whom 20 to 30 % should be women and youth.
- 6) On 20 June, U Aung Moe Zaw, chairman of the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) said that his party would field 50 candidates and would

contest 10 to 15 townships in the country. He insisted the Myanmar Army should announce a nationwide ceasefire, in order for the elections to be held across the whole country. The DPNS was founded in 1988 by a 8888 leader, and it advocates for democracy, human rights and federalism. However, it remains a marginal party, with no representative at the Union Parliament.

- 7) On 22 June, Duwa Gumgrawng Awng Hkam, the vice chairman of the Kachin State People's Party (KSPP) reported that his party formed a committee to select candidates in Kachin State. The party will field 68 candidates in 18 townships of Kachin State. It will reportedly put the emphasis on women, youth, and activists. The KSPP is a merger of 4 Kachin ethnic parties. Although the future of such an alliance may be uncertain, it is representative of a wider trend in Myanmar: small ethnic parties tend to merge to gather votes and avoid voter dispersion.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Main Incidents

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

- 1) 18 June – Shan State (North): A truck crashed with a car on Union Road, Muse Township. 2 people died at hospital and 2 people got injured.
- 2) 18 June – Mandalay Region: A speeding car crashed on a lamppost and burned between mileposts 7/5 and 7/6 on the highway between Mandalay International Airport and Mandalay town at 18:20hrs. The driver died on the spot.
- 3) 18 June – Magway Region: A speeding truck with loads overturned between mileposts 246/3 and 246/4 in Sinbaungwe Township, and the driver got injured.
- 4) 19 June – Naypyitaw – Yangon Highway: A car overturned between mileposts 16/7 and 16/6 on Naypyitaw – Yangon Highway at 13:30hrs and one person got injured.
- 5) 19 June – Yangon Region: a speeding bus crashed a motorcycle at milepost 64/2 in Taikkyi Township at 13:00hrs. One of the motorcycle passengers died on the spot and another one got seriously injured. The driver was charged with existing law.
- 6) 20 June – Mon State: A fuel truck slipped and hit a man between mileposts 185/2 and 185/3 in Paung Township, Mon State at 11:00hrs. 2 people including the driver got seriously injured and one person got minor injury.

- 7) 21 June – Magway Region: A car accident occurred between mileposts 21 and ½ on Lingadaw – Myaing – Pakokku Highway, Magway Region at 12:25 hrs and 1 person got injured.
- 8) 21 June – Kayin State: A truck hit two people and overturned due to brake system failure between mileposts 160 and 161 in Myawaddy Township at 17:40hrs. One person died on the spot and 5 people got injured.
- 9) 21 June – Mandalay Region: A truck crashed a motorcycle on the opposite lane at milepost 307 on Yangon – Mandalay old Highway. 2 people died on the spot and one pregnant woman died on the way to hospital. The driver was charged with existing law.
- 10) 22 June – Yangon Region: A speeding car collided with 7 cars in Hlaing Township at 11:45 hrs. No injury nor fatality was reported. The driver was charged by existing law.
- 11) 22 June – Sagaing Region: A car accident occurred in Sagaing Township at 10:50hrs and 2 people got injured.
- 12) 22 June – Shan (North): A bus overturned due to brake system failure between mileposts 45/5 and 45/6 on Kyaukme – Mogoke Highway, in Monglon Township at 11:30hrs. 3 out of 15 passengers got injured.
- 13) 23 June – Kayah State: A car overturned on Loikaw – Demoso Highway, Loikaw Township at 20:30hrs and the driver got injured.
- 14) 23 June – Yangon Region: A speeding Taxi hit a tree in front of City Golf Club in Insein Township at 23:25hrs and the driver got injured.
- 15) 23 June – Bago Region: A speeding Taxi hit a tree in Shwe Taung Township, Bago at 22:30hrs. One person got seriously injured and one got minor injury.
- 16) 23 June – Bago Region: An ambulance crashed on a truck on the opposite lane on Pyay – Paukhaung Highway at 21:10hrs. The driver of the truck died on the spot and 4 people got 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. Among other risks, this road 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

### Main Incidents

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

- 1) 18 June – Magway Region: A 19 years old boy was stabbed to death by a Buddhist monk in Aunglan Township. The offender was arrested.
- 2) 19 June – Mandalay Region: A staff at a hair cosmetic distribution centre was stabbed to death by a colleague in Chanmyatharzi Township. The offender was arrested.
- 3) 19 June – Sagaing Region: A 88 years old woman was sexually assaulted by a man in Kale Town. She passed away at the hospital. The offender was arrested.
- 4) 19 June – Sagaing Region: A man was shot dead by his nephew after a quarrel, in Indaw Township. The offender was arrested and charged with existing law.
- 5) 19 June, Rakhine State: a soldier was shot dead in his barrack. It is assumed that personal conflicts pitted him to some fellow soldiers.
- 6) 20 June – Rakhine State: A 13 years old girl was found severely injured in a building under construction at Sittwe Town on 19 June. She passed away in Sittwe Hospital. That case is being investigated by authorities.
- 7) 20 June – Shan State (North): after the discovery of two women's dead bodies near a Chinese cemetery in Lashio Township on 16 June, the suspected murderer was arrested.
- 8) 21 June – Thailand: the dead body of a Myanmar female worker who was missing for 6 days was found in the north of the country. She was from Natmauk Town, Magway Region.
- 9) 21 June – Sagaing Region: An express bus transporting migrant workers from Thailand who had finished their quarantine was stoned by unknown men with motorbike in Tigyaing Township. One person on the bus got injured.

**TRAFFICKING****Main incidents**

- 1) 16 June, Mandalay Region: acting on a tip-off, the authorities raided several houses, seizing 1870 packs of heroin with a total value of more than 1.3 billion MMK, i.e. 930,000 USD. 5 people were arrested.
- 2) 16 June, Sagaing Region: two women were arrested in Monywa for transporting 170 pills of amphetamines. When the police searched their house, it also found fake bank notes.
- 3) 17 and 18 June, Shan State (South): security forces searched 3 houses and found 8,440 pills of amphetamines in Taunggyi, with a total value of 8.3 million MMK, i.e. 6,000 USD. 5 people were arrested.
- 4) 17 June, Mon State: acting on a tip-off, authorities in Mudon town seized 139,000 amphetamine tablets from two people staying in a hotel. The value of the seizure is 968 million MMK, i.e. 690,000 USD.
- 5) 18 June, Shan State (East): the authorities in Mong Ton Township found some guns and some illegal drugs hidden in a hut in Pu Na Ko village. Illegal drugs included 289,000 amphetamine tablets, 0.35 kilogram of heroin and drugs precursors. This raid led to another one, during which the police found 55,500 amphetamine tablets. The total value of the seizure was 520 million MMK, i.e. 370,000 USD.
- 6) 19 June, Shan State (North): the authorities in Namkham Township seized 5.83 kilogram of heroin from a man on a motorbike. The seizure had a value of 110 million MMK, i.e. 79,000 USD. That person was arrested by the police.
- 7) 19 June, Bago Region: acting on a tip-off, the police of Pyu Township arrested a woman after 1,900 amphetamine tablets in her house, for a value of 5.7 million MMK (4000 USD).
- 8) 19 June, Shan State (East): the authorities seized guns and drugs in Nar Jai village, Tachileik Township. The haul comprised 7,000 pills of amphetamine, 0.3 kg of heroin, and 1 kg of black raw opium, for a total value of 12 million MMK, i.e. 8,500 USD.
- 9) 19 June, Shan State (East): police intercepted a car in Tachileik Township and seized 2 million amphetamine tablets, 45 kg of heroin and guns, for a total value 3 billion MMK, i.e. 2 million USD.

- 10) 19 June, Mandalay Region: four university students were arrested in Mandalay after the police found 3 kg of cannabis in their belongings, for a value of 1.5 million MMK (1,070 USD).
- 11) 20 June, Shan State (North): the authorities raided a house and seized six guns, and six small bags of methamphetamine. The authority arrested two men, who mentioned they bought those products from a Chinese man living in Kutkai.
- 12) 21 June, Shan State (South): two women from Ywangan township were arrested in Taunggyi. The police found 18 kilogram of raw opium in their car. They reportedly bought it in Moe Bye township, near Kayah State, one of the epicentres of poppy farming in Myanmar. The illegal drug value is 10 million MMK, i.e. 7,100 USD.
- 13) On 22 June, Shan State (North): the Myanmar authorities held a drug burning ceremony in anticipation of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, scheduled on 26 June. On a field near Kutkai town, they burnt nearly 3.4 billion MMK worth of drugs seized in the last weeks, i.e. 2.3 million USD.

On 17 June, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) reported that the detention centre it runs for drugs users and traffickers (in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State) is now full. From March to the first week of May, the NMSP troops arrested and detained approximately 50 people for illicit drug use.

On 8 June, the Karen Border Affairs Minister had requested the permission from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) to investigate about one of its senior commanders, Colonel Saw A-One, accused of illegal drug trafficking. As of 24 June, the DKBA is yet to reply.

On another note, on 23 June, in Mae Sot (Thailand), Thai army seized a massive cargo of weapons, meant to be smuggled into Myanmar, including Rakhine State. It comprised AK 47, M16, sniper guns, ammunitions and landmines, for a total value of 970,000 USD. The Thai authorities seized weapons from a house belonging to a Thai citizen. They arrested two Thai citizens and six Myanmar citizens.

### **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

### Current situation

Myanmar is located on the active Sagaing seismic fault line and is therefore vulnerable to earthquakes. Since our previous report on 18 July 2020, 5 earthquakes have been measured, but no fatality and injury has been reported:

Date	Location	Magnitude	Damages and casualties
18 June	Magway Region	4.8	-
21 June	Sagaing Region	3.7	-
21 June	Myanmar-India border	5.2	-
22 June	Myanmar-India border	5.9	4 buildings were reportedly damaged in Chin State
24 June	Chin State	3.9	-

### 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

### Current Situation

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

- 1) 19 June 2020 – Mandalay Region: Fire broke out in a hut in Mahlaing Township and one person died in fire.
- 2) 22 June 2020 – Yangon Region: A flat in 6 Ward, below 30 Street, Pabedan Township collapsed. No injury nor fatality was reported.

- 3) 23 June 2020 - Yangon Region: Fire broke out at 2 Ward, Hlaing Township, at 18:20hrs. No injury nor fatality was reported.
- 4) 22 June 2020 – Mon State: Fire broke out due to electric wire shock in a village of Ye Township, at 15:45 hrs. More than 20 houses were destroyed.
- 5) 23 June 2020 – Chin State: Fire broke out at newspaper office in Kale Town at 15:50 hrs. No injury nor fatality was reported as it has been closed since April due to Covid – 19.

### **Comments and recommendations**

Fire is a severe risk in Myanmar. 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 or mosquito coils.

- **Health Hazards**

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

When EXERA released its previous Weekly Security Review (WSR), the figure for 18 June at 10:50 Hrs was 262 confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 16 more than the previous week.

As of 24 June, at 08:00 Hrs, 292 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 30 new cases in the last week. As previous week, virtually all of them are imported cases (29 out of 30): 20 from Thailand, 4 from Malaysia, 3 from Qatar and 2 from Bangladesh.

Patients back from Thailand, Malaysia or Qatar 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. However, cases from Bangladesh are different: those patients crossed the border illegally, mingled with local communities for several days before showing symptoms and getting tested. They could therefore create local contamination chains: the only local case in Myanmar during the reporting period was discovered in Rakhine State, on a patient who had been in contact with a returnee from Bangladesh. In total, 9 positive cases have been identified in Rakhine State since the beginning of the epidemic, and most of them since early June, which may suggest a cluster is appearing locally. The authorities have slammed illegal

migrants and those who help them. They acknowledged that some members of the security forces were involved in illegal border crossings.

Based on MoHS statistics, 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 24 June at 08:00 hrs, 111 new cases were confirmed, out of which 106 imported cases: 45 Myanmar nationals back from India, 22 from Thailand, 17 from Malaysia, 8 from UAE, 8 from Bangladesh, 3 from Qatar 2 from Italy, and 1 from China. The high amount of people tested positive while in quarantine may suggest that quarantine facilities themselves may active clusters. This raises the question as to whether quarantine facilities can efficiently contain the epidemic.

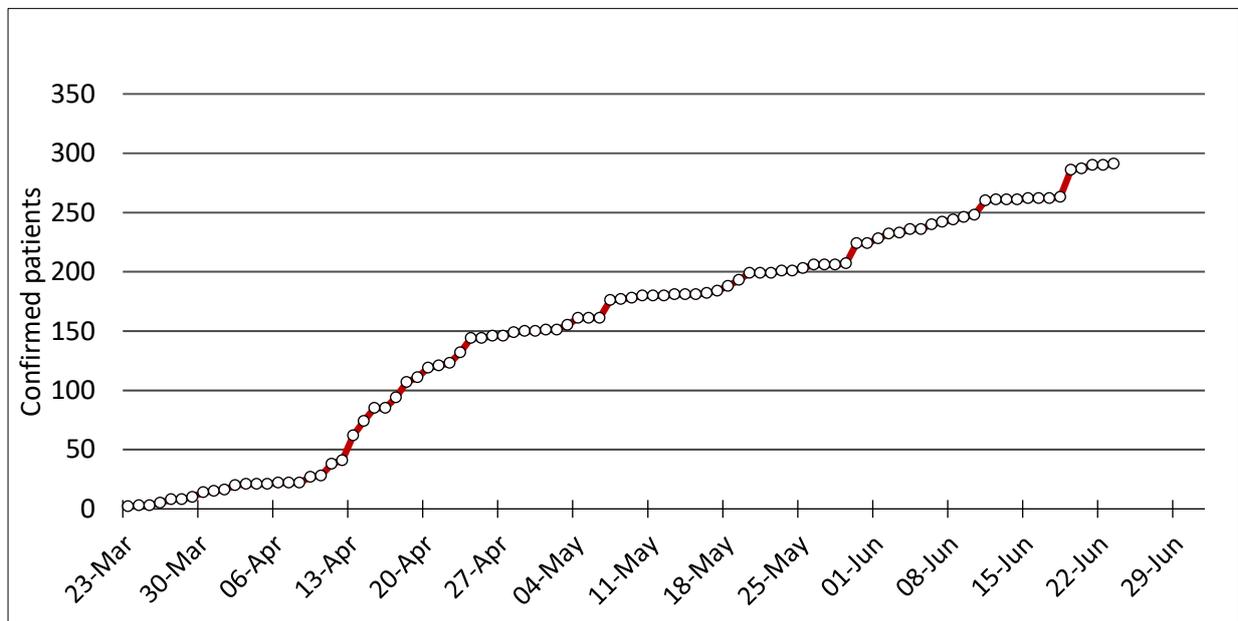


Figure 2: Total Covid-19 cases in Myanmar since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. Source: MoHS

Numerous Myanmar nationals have been repatriated since the beginning of the crisis. For the sole period from 1 May to 20 June, more than 32,000 people came back from Thailand through Myawaddy border checkpoint land. Repatriation was also operated by flight: as of 23 June, Myanmar had repatriated a total of 4893 people by special relief flights.

As of 24 June 2020, at 08:00 hrs, MoHS has tested a total of 66,381 people since the beginning of the epidemic. Since the publication of the latest WSR, 11,888 people have been tested, i.e. an average of 1698 per day, versus 1844 in in the previous reporting period. 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 significant testing.

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 24 June, at 08:00 hrs, a total of 292 people have been contaminated in the country, out of whom 204 in Yangon Region (i.e. 70 %)
- the current number of active patients, which is the immediate risk indicator. As of 24 June, at 08:00 hrs, there were 82 active patients in the country, out of whom 42 in Yangon Region (i.e. 51 %).

In Yangon, the main clusters are:

Township	Number of cases since the beginning of the epidemic	Number of cases for 10,000 inhabitants
Insein	49	1.44
South Okkalapa	23	1.43
Mayangone	17	0.86
Botahtaung	13	3.2
Hlaing	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 South Okkalapa and Hlaing 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 25 cases, mostly due to returnees from Thailand
2. Chin State with 10 cases
3. Sagaing Region with 9 cases
4. Rakhine State with 9 cases
5. Bago (West) Region with 8 cases

The set of preventive decisions that had been made by the authorities in March and April has been extended on 15 May, 28 May and 12 June, with gradual relaxing throughout time.

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.

- 2) International commercial flights, as well as the issuance of any kind of visa remain suspended until 30 June at 23.59 Myanmar time. Relief and special flights are not concerned.
- 3) A curfew remains enforced from midnight to 04.00 Hrs.
- 4) Wearing facial mask in public spaces remains compulsory
- 5) While 10 Yangon townships used to be under semi-lockdown measures at the peak of the crisis in Paril, those orders have progressively been lifted. The only township still under semi-lockdown order is Insein. Local inhabitants are not supposed to leave their homes, except to go to work, buy supplies and seek medical care. The restrictions in Mayangone Township were lifted on 15 June at 4:00 Hrs.
- 6) Express inter-city bus service operates back to normal, although they have to follow MoHS guidelines. Bus companies report that passengers are still very scarce. In Yangon, YBS mainly operate back to normal, while most airlines have resumed their domestic operations. Depending on their destination,

travellers are requested to produce a residence certificate or a recommendation letter from their ward/village administrator.

On 23 June, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism made it clear that foreigners with legal stay permit in Myanmar (except those who live in Insein Township) can travel without any restriction in Myanmar except for restricted areas imposed by Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Home Affairs.

Current government restrictions, among which the suspension of all commercial international flights, will remain enforced until 30 June. It is still unknown whether they will be lifted on 1 July or extended. More information should surface in the next few days.

### **Comments and recommendations**

Based on the current data, the epidemic seems to be receding in Myanmar, with few local cases. However, a second wave of contamination remains possible if precautions are not relaxed sensibly. In the last few weeks, the Myanmar authorities have urged Myanmar people not to let their guard down, and to remain extremely careful in the long run. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi even specified that a second wave may hit the country harder than the first one.

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

- wear facial mask in public spaces: it is a compulsory requirement on streets and on buses. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, 3,100 people were fined in May for failing to wear facial mask nationwide.
- Abide by the curfew rules, from midnight to 4 am. In the sole Kayin State, 861 people were arrested from 18 April to 16 June for breaching the curfew rules. More than 180 of them were sentenced to one month in jail. Violation of Section 188, which prohibits deliberate disobedience to an order “duly promulgated” by a public servant, is punishable by one month in prison, a fine or both.

According to the spokesperson of the President Office U Zaw Htay, 8,470 people have been sued in the last 3 months 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

ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

ICOE: Independent Commission of Enquiry

IED: Improvised Explosive Device

ICJ: International Court of Justics

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

EAO: Ethnic Armed Organization

KDA: Kachin Defense Army

KIA: Kachin Independence Army

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

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