

**Burma Democratic Futures Working Group (BDFWG)
University of Virginia**

August 2023 Report: Myanmar

Table of Contents	Page
Overview	2
The Military Council’s Release of Political Prisoners	2
The United States Government Continues to Place Embargoes on Companies Importing and Distributing Jet Fuel to Myanmar	3
The Military Council Holds a Meeting with Five NCA Signatories	4
The Military Council Releases a New 20,000 Kyat Banknote Under Conditions of High Inflation	4
Military Conflicts	5
Table 1: Data on Military Conflicts	6
Figure 1: Map of Conflicts	7
Human Rights Violations	8
Table 2: Data on Human Rights Violations	8

Overview

Burma's political problems and military conflicts are still increasing in frequency and scale during the month of August. In Kachin State and Northern Shan State, the fighting between KIA, TNLA and the Military Council forces has intensified. In order to reduce international pressure, the Military Council made the decision to release some prisoners and grantsome relief to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint.

The Military Council also extended the state of affairs declaration for another six months in order to maintain its control of the country. His promise to hold an election neverspecified a specific time period. The Miltiary Council has made visible efforts to prepare for the elections, so it is highly unlikely for them to hold a national election during the six month extension

Internationally, the US government added two companies that import jet fuel to Burma on the list of embargo measures. This will hopefully put more financial pressure on the Military regime.

On one hand, the Military Council had political discussions with some groups that have signed the NCA in order to further suppress opposing democratic forces. The Military Council is advertising that they are holding peace conferences, but in reality only a few signatories of the NCA are participating. The peace conference doesn't include other major key organizations that are necessary for the country to make peace.

Some political prisoners were released as well during the month of August. Experts say that the Military's regime instability was the reason behind the release of many political prisoners. It was an act for the international community, to gain more public favor.

The Military Council's Release of Political Prisoners

The full moon of August 1st has significant meaning to Buddhists in Burma. As a commemoration of Holy Friday, 7,749 people incarcerated in various prisons across the country were asked to sign affidavits. The military council then granted pardons to the prisoners. Additionally, the sentences imposed on the State Counselor and President U Win Myint were also reduced. Out of the 19 cases held against Aung San Suu Kyi, five of them have already been sentenced. Of the charges that are still active, she got a six year reduction on her prison sentence. For U Win Myint, he had a four year reduction in two cases out of the 12 cases held against him.

Among the prisoners were ethnic revolutionary organizations such as the National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP), 22 members of Rakhine Army (AA) groups, and 125 foreigners. The

military council announced that 72 people, related to ethnic armed groups, still facing charges were released.

"However, among the many prisoners who were released there were only a few political prisoners. A total of 24,586 people were arrested for opposing the military coup d'état. Of which, 19,901 are still in detention and another 7,210 who have already been imprisoned for conviction of charges. There are a total of 102 people who have been sentenced to death for being involved with the Spring Revolution. A total of 119 people were sentenced in absentia, including 43 people who were sentenced to death in absentia. The number of people who were released after being arrested out of the total is only 4,685.

The military council granted amnesty to prisoners to reduce international pressure. Therefore, the amnesty of the military council is not a political relaxation. It was only to deceive the international community.

The United States Government Continues to Place Embargoes on Companies Importing and Distributing Jet Fuel to Myanmar

Asia Sun Group of Companies imports jet fuels and equipment for the Military Council. The Asia Sun Trading Company and Cargo Link company handles the logistics of importing jet fuels. Both companies were sanctioned on March 24th of this year.

Last June, the US government announced sanctions against Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank (MICB) which are owned by the Military Council. Sanctioning these banks will restrict the military government's budget, and limit their ability to buy fuel.

The US government announced on the 23rd of August that Shoon Energy Company, P.E.I Energy, PEIA company, and company owners Daw Khin Phyu Win, and U Zaw Min Tun are owners of 11 companies in the Asia Sun group that have previously been sanctioned. In total 15 groups and individuals have been sanctioned by the US.

According to the 2023 report of the "Ah Linn Thit Research Group", ever since the military council seized power there have been airstrikes at a rate of once every two days for over two years and four months. In total, there have been 1,427 airstrikes launched by the military council incurring civilian casualties. The airstrike in Pazigy village, Kanbalu township, Sagaing province which incurred 160 civilian deaths being the worst mass killing in all of the airstrikes.

A method of preventing the military's airstrikes is to sanction companies that import jet fuels. If military combat aircrafts are not able to use jet fuel, then subsequently they cannot conduct airstrikes on civilians and villages. Sanctioning companies that sell jet fuels is a necessary way to put a stop to the military's violent atrocities.

The Military Council Holds a Meeting with Five NCA Signatories

On August 28, the National Unity and Peace Coordination Committee of the Military Council met with the five signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement: ALP, KNU/KNLA-PC, DKBA, PNLO, and LDU. In the meeting, political party groups and an analysis group that was formed under the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee through the NCA discussed amendments to the 2008 Constitution. Four main topics were discussed, such as multi-party general election issues, humanitarian aid delivery in EAO controlled areas and the statement of the five signatories of NCA states. In a military announcement, the five groups signed on four basic agreements and five common agreements that will be carried out in the future.

KNU, one of the NCA signatories, commented at a press conference last month that the NCA is invalid because the military broke the agreement by starting the military coup.

Among the 10 NCA signatories, only seven groups are officially meeting with the Military Council. Among those groups, the Restoration Council for Shan State and the New Mon State Party did not participate in the August 28th talks. They are instead having one on one discussions with the Military Council. The groups that are meeting with the military include: United Wa State Party, Shan State Progressive Party and the National Democratic Alliance Army. However, they have not been able to reveal what progress has been achieved and what kind of benefits certain people are receiving from the conflict.

Therefore, up until the present, the military council and the 10 ethnic armed groups (UWSP, SSPP, NDAA, KNU/KNLA-PC, ALP, RCSS, NMSP, LDU, PNLO, DKBA) have held many talks, but there is still no sign of actual peace. According to the KNU, one of the NCA signatories, the military had already broken the terms of the agreement by breaking the peace and starting the military coup.

The Military Council Releases a New 20,000 Kyat Banknote Under Conditions of High Inflation

The military council issued new bank notes, out of a growing need for more revenue. After the new bank notes were in circulation, the prices of goods in Myanmar have dramatically inflated. People are struggling even more now to purchase their daily necessities.

Gold and the US dollar are now very important to Myanmar's economy. Depending on the price of the dollar, food prices will fluctuate as well. Before the military takeover, one US dollar was worth around 1,300 kyats and 16.6 grams of gold was around 13,000,000 kyats. Currently one US dollar is worth around 3,800 kyats and 16.6 grams of gold has risen to around 38,000 kyats. The exchange rate set by the Central Bank of the Military Council is 2100 kyats per dollar, but the market price is in reality around 3,610 kyats per US dollar. The gold reference price on August 25th officially published by the Gold Industry Association controlled by the Military Council was 2,200,000 kyats and 3,800,000 kyats market price.

The market price of basic cooking oil was around 10,000 kyats per viss (1.6 Kg) compared to the price by the oil merchant association controlled by the Military Council which was around 4,400 kyats. The market value of basic cooking oil is two times the price of the military controlled price.

The price of rice, a staple food for Myanmar citizens, has tripled over the two and a half years after the coup. In 2021, right after the coup, a 108 pound bag of basic rice was only 20,000 kyats. However now a 108 lb bag of basic rice can be priced between 60,000 to 80,000 kyats. A 108 pound bag of higher quality rice ranges from 95,000 kyats to 150,000 kyats.

The average monthly salary of Myanmar is 550,000 kyats according to worldsalary.com. However, the majority of Myanmar people are earning less than 200,000 kyats per month.

Military Conflicts

In August, increased widespread fighting broke out across Myanmar. A few months ago, there were few scattered military conflicts in northern Shan State, however during the month of August the Taang National Liberation Army (TNLA) intensified its offensives. In Chin State, many battles broke out between the military council and joint revolutionary forces. The Battle of Thantlang was one of the best operations conducted by joint forces of the Chin National Army (CNA) and CDF-HAKh, CDF-Thantlang, CDF-Zophei, CDF-Zanniatram and CDF-Hualngoram. These groups organized simultaneous attacks on military troops stationed in four different positions in Thantlang. 13 Revolutionary Joint Force members were killed in comparison to the 30 SAC soldiers, including Major Kyaw Soe Min, were killed.

Intense fighting also took place in Karenni (Kayah) State and in the Sagaing region. Fierce fighting broke out between military council troops and revolutionary forces in the area between Demoso township and Hpruso township in Karenni State. According to the statistics released by the Karenni Defense Forces (KNDF), there were 50 battles in total. Besides land warfare, there were also 45 airstrikes conducted by the military council.

In August, there was a major conflict that broke out between joint forces of PDFs and Military Council troops in Boma Thantaung, a few kilometers away from Nay Pyi Taw, the capital city of the Military Council. The Military Council forces were driven out of Bomathantaung Hill by joint revolutionary forces. The fact that revolutionary forces have now brought the battle so close to the Nay Pyi Taw has implications for the waning strength of the military.

More information about military conflicts between the SAC and revolutionary forces, collected by news media, can be seen in the table below.

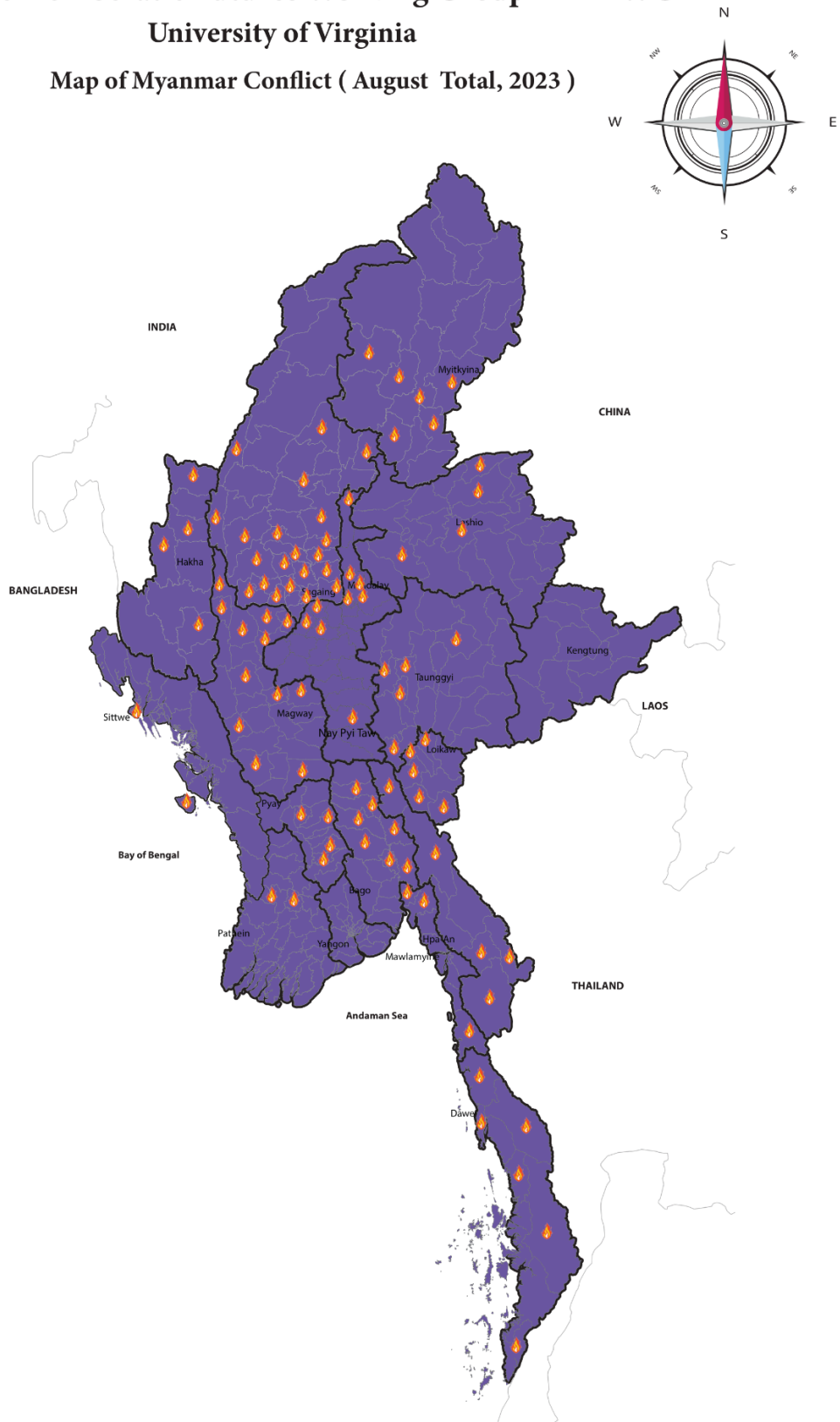
Table 1: Data on Military Conflicts

Table 1: Data of Myanmar Conflicts in August 2023			
States	Clashes between SAC and PDF/EAOs	SAC's soldiers killed	PDF killed
BAGO	13	79	3
CHIN	6	46	15
KACHIN	9	7	
KAYAH (Karenni)	11	107	
KAYIN	19	79	1
MAGWAY	35	114	3
MANDALAY	13	43	2
MON	8	53	
RAKHINE	1		
SAGAING	61	275	7
SHAN (North)	17	21	
SHAN (South)	1	10	1
TANINTHARYI	10	42	
TOTAL	204	876	32

Figure 1: Map of Conflicts

**Burmese Democratic Futures Working Group - BDFWG
University of Virginia**

Map of Myanmar Conflict (August Total, 2023)



Human Rights Violations

Since the military coup, there have been continuous human rights violations that continue into the present. Human rights violations are more often committed by military troops in regions where military conflicts are more intense. Human rights violations tend to happen more frequently in the Sagaing region, Magway region, Karenni (Kayah) State, and Kachin State. In the table below, there are more details about military clashes, civilian casualties, the burning down of villages, and the arresting of villagers and activists. This information is collected through news media reporting.

Table 2: Data on Human Rights Violations

Table 2: Data of Human Rights Violations by SAC in August 2023					
States	Children Killed	Civilians Killed	Civilians Arrested	Villages Set on Fire	Houses Burned Down
AYEYARWADY			11		
BAGO	3	29	1	1	24
CHIN		1	6		
KACHIN		1	60		30
KAYAH (Karenni)		1			56
KAYIN		1		3	8
MAGWAY		16	35	33	232
MANDALAY	1	8	20	1	60
RAKHINE			1		
SAGAING	5	56	53	13	397
SHAN (North)		2	5		
SHAN (South)		1	8		
TANINTHARYI			95	1	46
TOTAL	9	116	295	22	853

Acronyms

ALP - Arakan Liberation Party
CNA - Chin National Army
DKBA - Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
EAO - Ethnic Armed Organization
KIA - Kachin Independence Army
KNDF - Karenni Defense Forces
KNU/KNLA-PC - Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army
LDU - Lahu Democratic Union
MFTB - Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank
MICB - Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank
MNDAA - Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
NCA - Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDAA - National Democratic Alliance Army
NMSP - New Mon State Party
PNLO - Pa-O National Liberation Army
RCSS - Restoration Council of Shan State
SSPP - Shan State Progressive Party
TNLA - National Liberation Army
UWSP - United Wa State Party

References

1. <https://www.bbc.com/burmese/articles/cg3l989717zo>
2. <https://www.bbc.com/burmese/articles/c51r9j6ngqjo>
3. <https://chinjournal.org/>
4. <https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=125879553936111>
5. <https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=685577246954460&set=a.474439804734873>
6. <https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=692929369537623&set=a.605896071574287>