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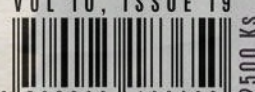
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CONFLICT WIDENS

**Myanmar sees increase
in military clashes**

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FREE JOURNALISTS

EDITORIAL

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MIZZIMA MAGAZINE

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INFORMATION

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As Myanmar's State Administration Council continues its oppression of the people's will, Journalists once again have become the targets of a military regime seeking to prevent access to information.

Preliminary investigations by CPJ found at least 40 journalists imprisoned were imprisoned as of last week, the majority were detained during newsroom raids or while covering anti-coup street protests.

The CPJ last week called for the immediate and unconditional release of all of the journalists detained since the country's February 1 coup, and a stop to the use of legal threats to harass and intimidate the media.

According to Shawn Crispin CPJ's senior Southeast Asia representative, 'Myanmar's military regime has almost overnight become one of the worst jailers of journalists worldwide, with at least 40 members of the press held behind bars. The jailing of dozens of journalists is blunt and inhumane censorship, aimed at keeping Myanmar's citizens, and the global public, in the dark about the junta's often brutal activities.'

According to the CPJ, all but two of the detainees identified by CPJ are local journalists working for local outlets, with arrests and imprisonments documented in the cities of Yangon, Mandalay, Myintkyina, Taunggyi, Patheingyi, Myeik, Pyaw, Dawei, and Myaungmya. In addition, it has

confirmed the detentions of at least two foreign members of the press: Japanese journalist Yuki Kitazumi and American Nathan Maung, editor of the local news outlet Kamayut Media, who was arrested while covering an anti-coup protest on March 9.

Over half of those detained face charges under Article 505(a) of the penal code, a broad provision that criminalizes the dissemination of information or "fake news" that could agitate or cause security forces or officials to mutiny. Convictions under that provision allow for a maximum of three-year prison penalties, additionally, it has been reported that many of the detainees have been denied access to a lawyer or family members since their arrests.

In March, the junta quickly revoked the operating licenses of five privately run news outlets, including this one, Myanmar Now, 7Day News, DVB, and Khit Thit Media—and raided several of their bureaus to enforce the ban.

It is essential that free and unhindered press be allowed to operate and that those currently serving prison terms be released without fear of retribution for performing their duties in allowing free and fair information to be allowed to the public.

If the SAC wants to show its legitimacy, it should allow not only journalists but also all political prisoners to be freed.

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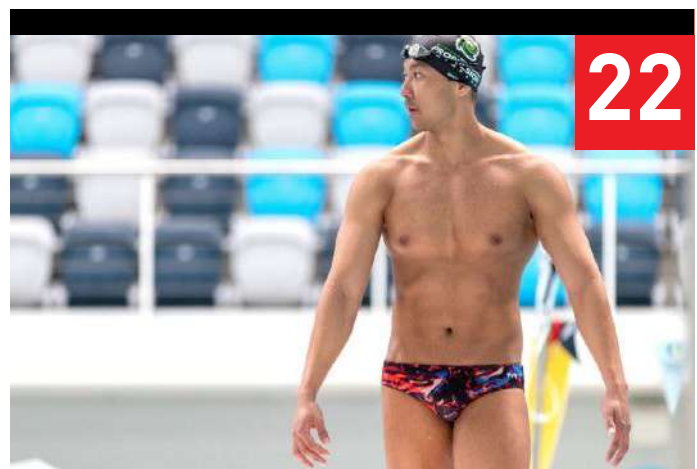
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ON THE MARCH

A Buddhist monk joins a demonstration in Mandalay last week calling for an end to the military dictatorship and a return of democracy in Myanmar. Photo: EPA

INDIAN SECURITY FORCES HAVE SEIZED A HUGE CACHE OF ARMS ALONG THE INDIA-MYANMAR BORDER

Indian security forces have seized a huge cache of arms, ammunition and other warlike stores from along the India-Myanmar border, officials said on Sunday, [ommcomnews](#) reported.

A Defence spokesman Lt. Col

P. Khongsai said that based on the specific intelligence input about the movement of insurgents in Manipur's Phaikoh and Kamjong areas, along the India-Myanmar frontiers, an operation was launched and seized the arms and other warlike stores late on Saturday.

The recovered arms and ammunition included two Lathode launchers with three rounds, one Chinese carbine, two rifles, four 9mm pistols, five rocket propelled grenades and two radio sets.

SEAN TURNELL BEING DETAINED IN INSEIN PRISON

Aung San Suu Kyi's economic advisor Sean Turnell is being detained at Insein Prison in Yangon and seems to be in good health, a recently freed student activist told Myanmar Now.

The Australian was detained days after the February 1 coup and the junta did not reveal his whereabouts. He was initially kept at a hotel in Yangon and then taken into police custody.

Turnell, Suu Kyi, and three of her cabinet members were charged with breaching the Official Secrets Act in late March.

RUSSIA 'CONCERNED' OVER THE SITUATION IN MYANMAR - KREMLIN SPOKESMAN

Russia is concerned over the situation in Myanmar, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday, [Anadolu Agency](#) reported.

The Kremlin closely follows the

situation in the country and condemns any actions, leading to civilian casualties, Peskov told reporters at a phone conference.

"We are very concerned and are watching with great attention what is

happening in Myanmar. We strongly condemn the actions that lead to the loss of human life among the civilian population," he said.

But Myanmar has to deal with its problems itself, Peskov added.

TAUNGUP MEN HELD ON TERRORISM CHARGES ACQUITTED

Nearly a year after being arrested and charged under the Counter-Terrorism Law, four men including the chair of the Taungup Township Development Affairs Committee in Arakan State were acquitted on Monday, according to their lawyer,

[Eurasian Review](#) reported.

The Taungup Township Court arraigned the men on June 30, 2020, on charges brought under Section 52(a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law, following their arrest in May of last year.

But the judge acquitted them on Monday, said their lawyer Daw Theingi Maung.

The were accused of having ties to the Arakan Army and providing food to the ethnic armed group.

A BIPARTISAN GROUP OF U.S. SENATORS URGE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TO ADD MORE SANCTIONS

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators on Tuesday urged the Biden administration to add more sanctions on the military junta in Myanmar, including choking revenues to a state energy company, in response to its coup and violent crackdown on protesters, AP reported.

Senators Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, and Marco Rubio, a Republican, and four others urged Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in a letter to “explore new avenues to support the people of Burma in their ongoing struggle for democracy in the face of escalating crimes against humanity.”

They want the Biden administration to stop royalties flowing from businesses including U.S. energy major Chevron to Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise that provides financial support to military leaders, including General Min Aung Hlaing, already under U.S. sanctions.

MYANMAR AIR BASES COME UNDER ROCKET FIRE

Two Myanmar air force bases came under rocket attack on last week, the military said, as the country grapples with violence in the wake of the February 1 coup.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the generals seized power, ousting civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and unleashing a wave of near-daily street protests calling for a return to democracy.

Security forces have sought to quell the unrest with a brutal crackdown on protests, with more than 750 civilians killed, according to a

local monitoring group.

Fighting has also flared up between the military and Myanmar's numerous ethnic rebel armies, some of which have backed the protest movement and sheltered activists on the run from the junta.

A military spokesman said air bases in the central cities of Magway and Meiktila came under rocket fire early on Thursday morning, but no damage was done.

It is not clear who was behind the attacks, but the military has launched air strikes in recent weeks against the

Karen National Union (KNU), one of the leading ethnic rebel armies.

The KNU, which holds territory along the border with Thailand, on Tuesday attacked and razed an army post, prompting the military to respond with air strikes.

The surge in clashes between the military and ethnic rebels has prompted some observers, including the UN, to warn that the country's crisis could spiral into a broader conflict.

AFP



KNLA fighters. Photo: Paul Keenan



CONFLICT WIDENS

Myanmar sees increase in military clashes

Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing's coup d'etat is not going as originally planned. Three months after the slickly executed arrests of Aung San Suu Kyi and most of the elected National League for Democracy (NLD) politicians, the senior general appears to be digging in his heels as the country slips towards civil war.

Despite the excuses he provided to ASEAN leaders as to why he executed the 1 February coup - the main one being alleged fraud and irregularities in the November 2020 election - his State Administration Council (SAC) is struggling to maintain control over the Golden Land.

This has been made increasingly clear over the last couple of weeks as military and military-related targets in Myanmar's heartland and periphery were hit in surprise attacks.

On 29 April, militants reportedly fired rockets at air force bases in Magwe and Meiktila in central Myanmar. An army weapons storage site near Bago, about 70 kilometres north of Yangon, was also attacked.

The unclaimed actions happened as clashes increased in Karen State, between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the military, and Kachin State, between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the military.

ENTRENCHED OPPOSITION

Air force bases being hit by rocket fire close to the military's capital Nay Pyi Taw was likely not on the cards when Myanmar's Commander in Chief carried out the coup three months ago.

The military takeover has been a catastrophe for Myanmar, prompting mass protests, and hinting now at a wider conflict.

However, despite calls from the civilian opposition for the setting up of a "Federal Army" and a slight ratcheting up of use of makeshift weapons in the hands of protestors, it is hard to predict the trajectory of this standoff.

This is not 1988 and it is harder for civilian opposition to arm themselves or gain sanctuary on the Thai side of the border, in part due to increased cooperation between the Thai and Myanmar governments and also due to the tighter scrutiny of the border due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yet, according to analysts, local resistance forces have emerged in Chin State and Sagaing Region, and improvised bomb and Molotov

cocktail attacks have been made against police stations in Yangon, Mandalay and Monywa.

'PEACE TALKS'

Opposition in the heartland and hinterlands could stretch the resources of the well-armed Myanmar military.

It is therefore no surprise that the military junta appears to be scrambling to lower tensions in the ethnic states by calling for talks - yet using air power to attack targets in the hills of Karen and Kachin states.

Responses from the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) to join forces with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) appear to have been mixed. While the KNLA and KIA have openly sided with openly with the CDM, other EAOs appear to be less supportive. Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) chairman Yawd Serk recently told Reuters that his group would not stand by idly if the junta's forces continue to kill protesters, yet there is little to indicate that his group is taking any action.

At a time when EAOs should be choosing sides, the RCSS has been

fighting a rival Shan group, the Shan State Army of the Shan State Progress Party and its ethnic Palaung allies in the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) for control of areas in northern Shan State, according to a recent report.

At the same time, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) appears to be sitting the crisis out, while the Arakan Army (AA), active largely in Rakhine State, appears to be staying neutral, as noted in the recent complaint of its leader Twan Mrat Naing, who claims the NLD failed to initiate a promised "federal union with equal rights for all nationalities".

The SAC appears to be playing games, seeking to use the carrot of peace to tamp down military actions by the EAOs and to further division.

The military-run newspapers announced on 30 April that the military would extend the nationwide ceasefire for one month. The announcement said the military will continue to negotiate with the armed groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and also hold talks with armed groups that have yet to sign up for the NCA.



A protester carries a hand-made rifle at a demonstration in Mandalay. Photo: EPA

The SAC appears to be playing games, seeking to use the carrot of peace to tamp down military actions by the EAOs and to further division.

While the junta is offering an olive branch to the EAOs, they continue brutal crackdowns on civilian protests, ramping up the numbers killed to over 750, and arresting thousands.

Fighting has flared up between the military and Myanmar's numerous ethnic rebel armies, some of which have backed the protest movement and sheltered activists on the run from the junta.

The surge in clashes between the military and ethnic rebels has prompted some observers, including the United Nations special envoy for Myanmar to warn that the country's crisis could spiral into a broader conflict.

ASEAN CALL

All eyes are on Myanmar military junta leader Min Aung Hlaing after his return from the ASEAN emergency meeting on Myanmar held in Jakarta.

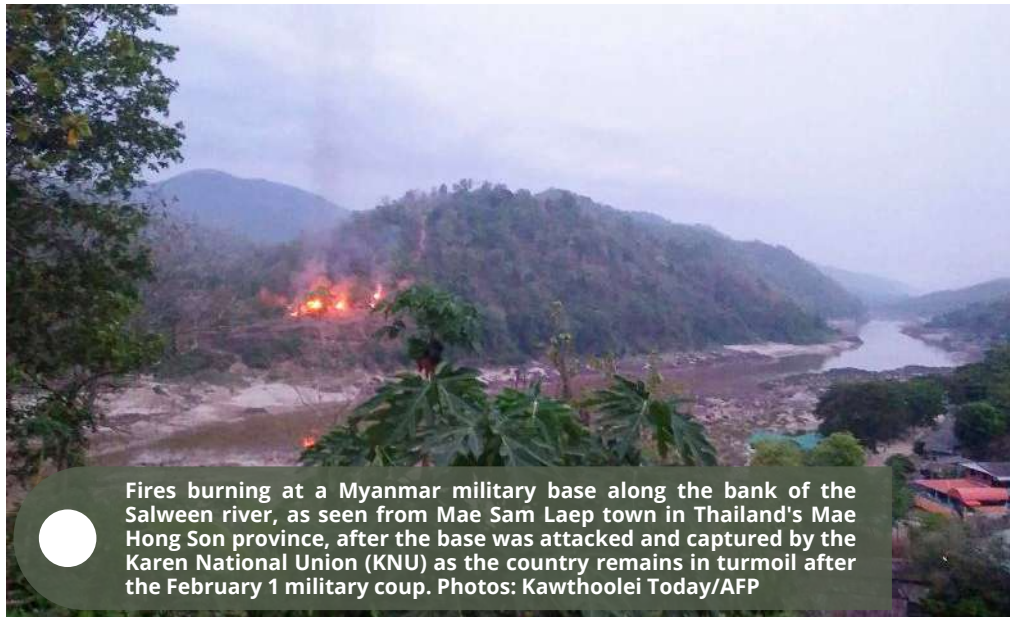
Those tracking the junta's activities indicate there is little to suggest that much has changed.

Despite the personal calls by several ASEAN leaders to the Myanmar junta to end the violence and enter into negotiations with the civilian opposition, the aggressive actions of the Myanmar security forces continue.

With every death, with every incarceration, Min Aung Hlaing's junta is pushing the country further and further towards a wider conflict.



A Karen National Union (KNU) fighter providing security during a demonstration against the military coup in the area under the control of the rebel group in Myanmar's eastern Karen state. Photo: AFP



Fires burning at a Myanmar military base along the bank of the Salween river, as seen from Mae Sam Laep town in Thailand's Mae Hong Son province, after the base was attacked and captured by the Karen National Union (KNU) as the country remains in turmoil after the February 1 military coup. Photos: Kawthoolei Today/AFP



AUNG SAN SUU KYI MARKS THIRD MONTH UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Myanmar's deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi completed a third month under military-ordered house arrest Saturday - a period marked by scatter-gun criminal charges and apparent isolation from the chaos engulfing the country.

The nation has been plunged into violence since the military deposed the Nobel laureate in a February 1 coup, ending Myanmar's brief tryst with democracy.

The resumption of junta rule sparked a wave of protests and a brutal crackdown on the pro-democracy movement, in which security forces have killed more than 750 people, according to a local monitoring group.

Charged on six counts including sedition and under Myanmar's official secrets law, Suu Kyi has been denied private meetings with her lawyers.

Instead, she has had only a couple of video meetings that were physically monitored by security officials at both

ends, her defence team told AFP.

"We haven't had the chance up to now to meet to get instruction from our client. Without getting instructions from the accused, how can we defend her?" lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP.

"We are very concerned for the defendant's right to justice."

Min Min Soe, another member of the defence team, said on Monday that Suu Kyi is cut off from information about the ongoing unrest at the house where she is being detained in the capital Naypyidaw.

"I think she is not getting access to watch news and TV. I do not think she knows the current situation," Min Min Soe said.

Symbol of Democracy

Suu Kyi spent more than 15 years under house arrest during previous military rule before her 2010 release and rise to power in elections held five years later.

Her international stature diminished following a wave of military violence targeting Buddhist-majority Myanmar's marginalised Muslim Rohingya community that displaced more than a million people, but the coup has returned Suu Kyi to the role of cloistered democracy icon.

"As somebody who has had an



Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyer, Khin Maung Zaw, right, talks to the press. Photo: EPA



impact on the democracy movement in Myanmar all these years, in that sense, she is irreplaceable," said Moe Thuzar from the Singapore-based ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, a politics and security research centre.

"Even if people did not agree with the politics of the National League for Democracy, the way they viewed Aung San Suu Kyi as someone who has led the opposition, someone who has spoken up for democracy in the past, and also, as the child of the country's independence hero, I think those things count for something."

Suu Kyi's NLD party built ties with the powerful military during the years of democracy, but the relationship

frayed after November's elections.

The NLD won a landslide but the military called foul and then seized power when the election commission failed to investigate fraud claims to the generals' satisfaction.

Since Suu Kyi's arrest 12 weeks ago, the military has deployed lethal force on the streets to try to crush demonstrations and arrested more than 4,500 people.

But the army has been careful to keep her out of sight, even as it has piled up criminal charges -- and corruption allegations -- against her.

Even if she is cut off from the

movement, her image adorns posters and banners at virtually every protest, and demonstrators demand her release.

"Mother Suu is old now and she will pass away some time, so we should assume our responsibilities without her," a 33-year-old activist told AFP.

"As Mom Su believes in us, we also believe in her again, and we will continue fighting until the winning moment of our uprising."

AFP



Protesters calling for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi who has been under house arrest since 1 February.
Photo: EPA

PPST TO REACH OUT TO NON-SIGNATORY ARMED ORGANISATIONS

Ten ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) prior to the coup will reach out to non-signatory EAOs for talks aimed at forming a coalition, Myanmar Now reported.

A seven-person committee was formed to orchestrate the discussions,

Col Sai Nguen, a spokesperson of the NCA-signatory EAOs' Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) told Myanmar Now.

Col Sai Nguen, who is also an officer within the Restoration Council of Shan State, said that the negotiations committee would approach groups such as the Kachin

Independence Army, United Wa State Army, Shan State Progress Party, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Arakan Army and the Karenni National Progressive Party about working together against the junta.

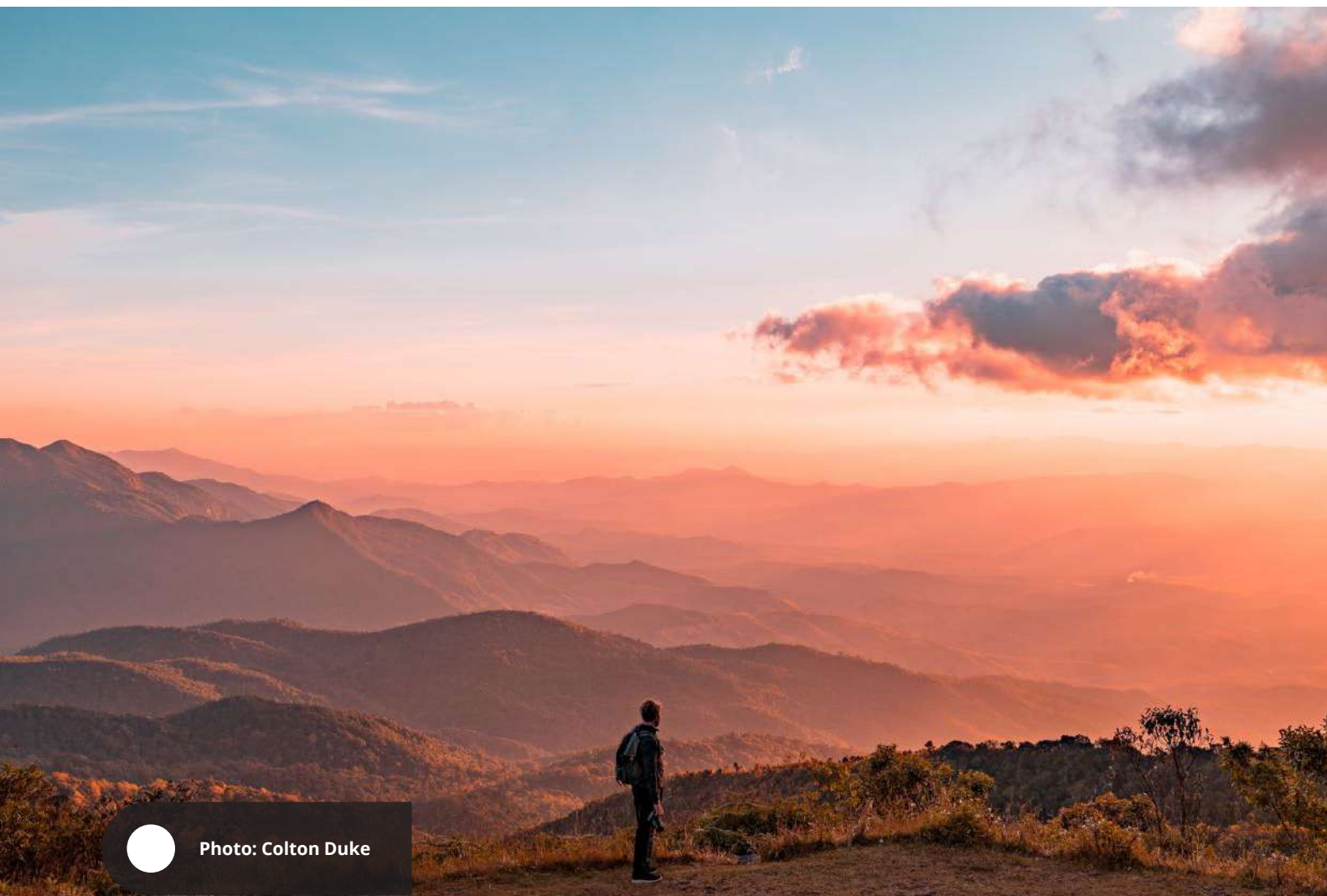
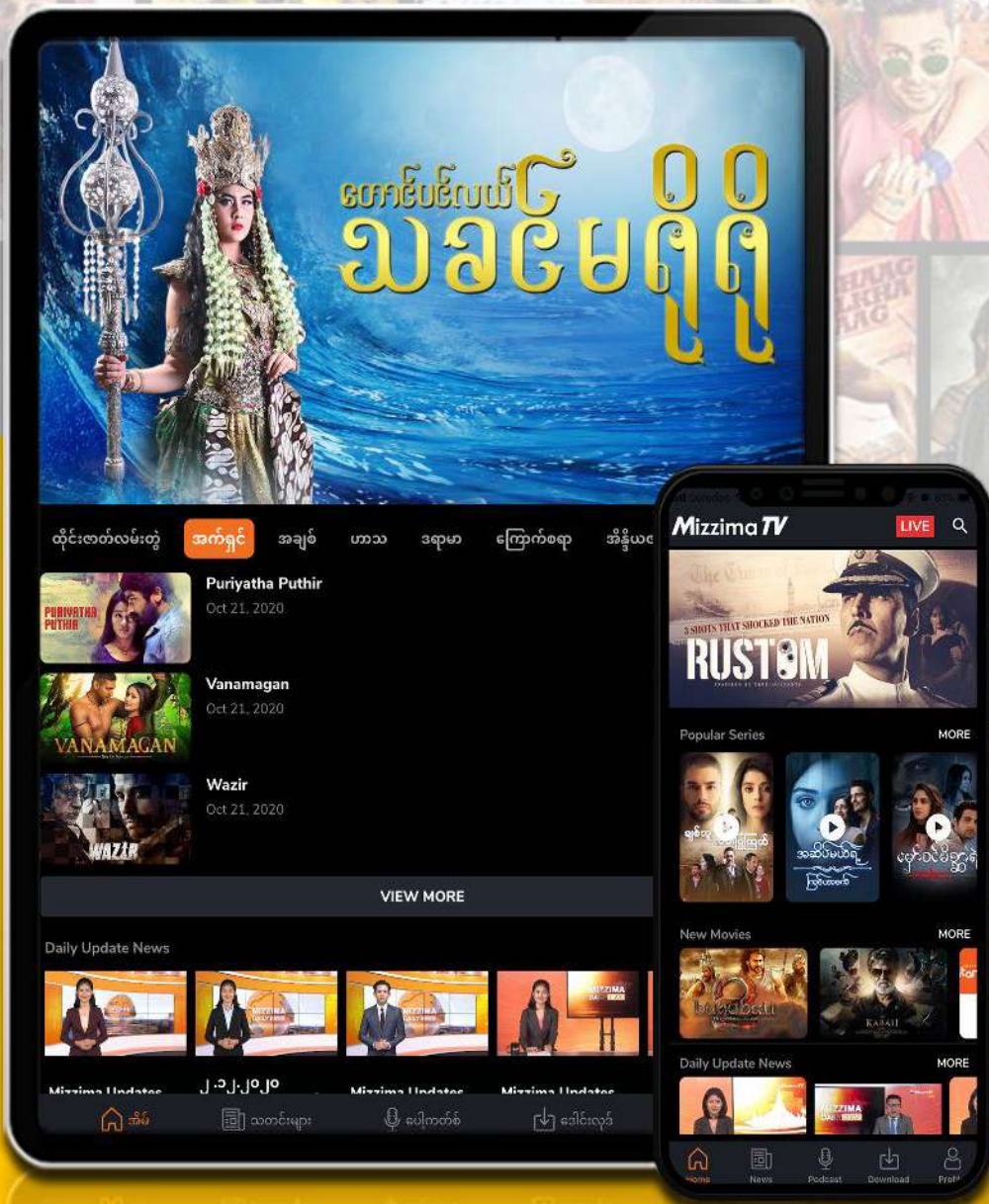


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CALL TO PROTECT WORKERS' RIGHTS IN CRISIS-HIT MYANMAR

As the world marks International Labour Day, the Industrial Workers' Federation of Myanmar (IWFM) is calling on international brands and suppliers in the garment industry to protect the rights of trade unionists in Myanmar and ensure that workers will not be dismissed during the ongoing protests against the military junta.

The IWFM says that under martial law, workers run the risk of arrest or even being shot by the military if they attempt to return to work in any of the country's major industrial zones. Moreover, transport links have been suspended and communications

channels blocked, making it almost impossible for workers to contact their employers.

The following is their official statement:

IWFM position and requests to all multinational brands and suppliers

Due to the martial law introduced by the military regime, workers in our sector are facing growing uncertainty. It is quite impossible for them to return to work and fulfil their contractual obligations, since military are shooting to people on the streets and transports from villages to

industrial zones are suspended. More over trade union representatives are facing a double danger: military shooting and arrests if they return to work together with the impossibility of continuing their trade union functions.

What is the situation?

Many workers are afraid to go back to work, because of the total lack of security in the industrial zones. Thousands of workers have returned to their home villages during the violent crackdown taken place in Hlaing Thar Yar on 14-15 March, when military killed over 100 people in that industrial area. Many trade union leaders had to go into hiding,



Factory workers in Yangon. Photo: EPA

because military started searching for them at factory level and at their homes. For many of them it is now difficult to return to work, due to lack of transportation and due to the many military checkpoints on the roads, where people are checked and arbitrarily detained or shot.

In Hlaing Thar Yar, the military is arbitrarily stopping workers on the streets demanding that they hand their phones to soldiers or under threat of arrest they obliging workers, if they do not have phones, to pay 20,000 MMK. During the 14-15 March crackdown, around 37 Chinese owned factories were burned or damaged. Two more garment factories in Hlaing Thar Yar were burned on April 7, leaving 16 people dead at the hands of the military.

Also due to these events, many workers are afraid to go back to work, fearing that their factories may also get burned in the future. The military regime cut phone lines and mobile

internet, so it is nearly impossible for workers to inform their employers, if they cannot return to work. Due to cut of communication, even union members cannot contact their union representatives and inform the employers.

Despite the many challenges, in March, most factories have re-opened their plants and, in many cases already, their management are using the current situation, and the factory regulations, to lay off workers and trade union representatives, for not attending work for more than 3 days. In this way they avoid to pay severance allowance, that they should have to pay, in case of regular retrenchments and in the same time they get rid of trade union representatives.

Under normal circumstances, workers lay off is legal, in case unjustified absence for more than 3 days. But in this situation, it is not fair that workers are dismissed without severance, if they don't attend work due to security reasons.

We know that, due to reduction of orders, many suppliers need to retrench workers. Therefore, in this situation we are asking the brands to urgently request their suppliers not to terminate workers, without severance pay.

How we need to address to the situation

In this situation we need to protect workers. We are calling on all multinational brands to work with unions and representatives of all brand suppliers in Myanmar, to protect workers who can't go back to work (for whatever reason: because they are in hiding, back in their villages or because they don't dare to come to work, etc.)

We are requesting the following from brands and suppliers.

IWFM requests to all brands

1. Brands should request their suppliers to give workers unpaid leave for an agreed period of time so that they will not lose their jobs.
2. In case of lay off due to the conflict situation, brands should protect workers from termination without severance.
3. Brands should inform all suppliers that they will not be

penalized, if they deliver late the ordered goods, due to the situation.

4. Brands should ask suppliers to receive the list of all workers who have been terminated or not been paid in full to the brands.
5. In case of disputes on termination cases, Brands should require the employers to provide the list of all terminated workers.

IWFM requests to all brand suppliers (Employers):

1. Employers should not put pressure on workers to return to work, if the security situation does not allow their safe return to the workplace.
2. Employers should give workers unpaid leave for an agreed period of time.
3. Employers should refrain from terminating workers without severance pay if they do not come to work because of security concerns.
4. Employers should send the list of all workers who have been terminated or not been paid in full to the brands.
5. In case of disputes on termination cases, employers should provide the list of all terminated workers to brands.

These commitments by the brands and suppliers are crucial to help protect workers from being harassed or killed when trying to return to work and to protect them from termination without severance pay if they cannot return to work because of security concerns.

IWFM calls on all multinational brands and suppliers to work together to protect workers from the dangers of being shot, injured or arrested in a desperate attempt to come to work – out of fear of being terminated without severance.

IWFM is ready to support for any discussion and negotiation with brands and suppliers as needed and support in agreed way. We look forward to the response from brands and suppliers to work together for the protection of workers.



MYANMAR JUNTA WANTS 'STABILITY' BEFORE HEEDING PLEAS ON VIOLENCE

Myanmar's junta said last week it would heed regional pleas to stop violence only when the country "returns to stability", as fresh fighting erupted with a major ethnic rebel group along its eastern border.

The nation has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, triggering a protest movement that security forces have met with deadly crackdowns.

The violence -- in which more than 750 people have been killed by security forces, according to a local monitoring group -- has raised alarm among regional neighbours.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing attended a weekend meeting on the crisis with the leaders of the 10-country Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) -- his first overseas trip since he seized power.

The leaders issued a "five-point consensus" statement that called for the "immediate cessation of violence" and a visit to Myanmar by a regional special envoy.

Myanmar's State Administrative Council -- as the junta dubs itself -- said it would consider the "constructive suggestions made by ASEAN leaders when the situation returns to stability in the country".

The statement also said its neighbours' suggestions would be "positively considered if it (ASEAN) would facilitate the implementation" of the junta's five-step roadmap.

Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP the regime was "satisfied" with the trip, saying it had been able to

explain the "real situation" to ASEAN leaders.

But ASEAN is not known for its diplomatic clout and observers have questioned how effectively it can influence events in the country.

The former US ambassador to Myanmar, Scot Marciel, warned that the military's response to the Jakarta summit showed signs of backsliding already.

"ASEAN cannot dither here, as the junta moves to walk back even the limited agreement reached Saturday," Marciel said in a tweet.

"There should be urgent follow-up, and costs imposed on the junta for delay."

AFP



Myanmar military junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, seen here arriving at the recent ASEAN emergency meeting on Myanmar. Photo: EPA

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MYANMAR SWIMMER DITCHES OLYMPIC DREAM TO PROTEST JUNTA VIOLENCE

Dene-Hern Chen

A Myanmar swimmer has abandoned his dream of competing at the Tokyo Olympics in protest at the junta ruling his homeland, saying that taking part would be "propaganda" for the regime.

Win Htet Oo is one of Myanmar's top swimmers but in early April, the 26-year-old said he was no longer interested in going to Tokyo.

"To accept the MOC (Myanmar Olympic Committee) as it is currently led is to recognise the legitimacy of a murderous regime," he wrote in a statement on Facebook. "I shall not march in the (opening ceremony's) Parade of Nations under a flag steeped in my people's blood."

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, with much of its population taking to the streets to demand a return to democracy.

To quell the uprising, security forces have cracked down with deadly violence, killing more than 750 civilians in anti-coup unrest, according to a monitoring group.

Besides street protests, a nationwide civil disobedience movement has brought large parts of the country's economy to a standstill -- with civil servants and workers boycotting their jobs in a refusal to serve the military regime.

Win Htet Oo said turning his back on Myanmar's Olympic team was his way of joining the movement.

"I wanted to show Myanmar people that athletes can take part in the civil disobedience movement," he told AFP, speaking from Melbourne,

Australia.

"The image of me walking behind the flag in the Parade of Nations and smiling -- pretending everything was all right -- quite frankly disgusted me."

"It would be a propaganda exercise, some sort of way to tell the world that everything is fine in Myanmar."

'Undermines Olympic values'

Much of the international community has condemned the junta for the coup and its use of violence against unarmed civilians.

Western powers -- including the US, EU and Britain -- have imposed sanctions targeting the military top brass and their business interests.

"I'm trying to let the IOC know and people know that the MOC is not a legitimate Olympic committee and they undermine Olympic values," Win Htet Oo said with a frustrated sigh.

Win Htet Oo said he wrote to the IOC in March, citing the ongoing violence in Myanmar and asking to compete as an Independent Olympic Athlete.

But his request was declined.

The swimmer achieved the 50 metres freestyle Olympic selection time at the 2019 Southeast Asian Games, putting him in the frame for Tokyo.

The International Olympic Committee said Win Htet Oo did not appear to have a place for the Games, as awarded via world swimming body FINA's qualifying system.

"To the best of our knowledge,



Mr. Oo has not yet obtained a quota for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020," a spokesperson said.

Swimming at the Olympics has been an ambition since childhood for Win Htet Oo, who moved to Melbourne in 2017 to fast-track his training.

Today he works as a lifeguard at a sports facility where he watches Australian athletes train for the Olympics, and does laps in between his shifts.

Win Htet Oo says he harbours "no regrets" about turning his back on the Games.

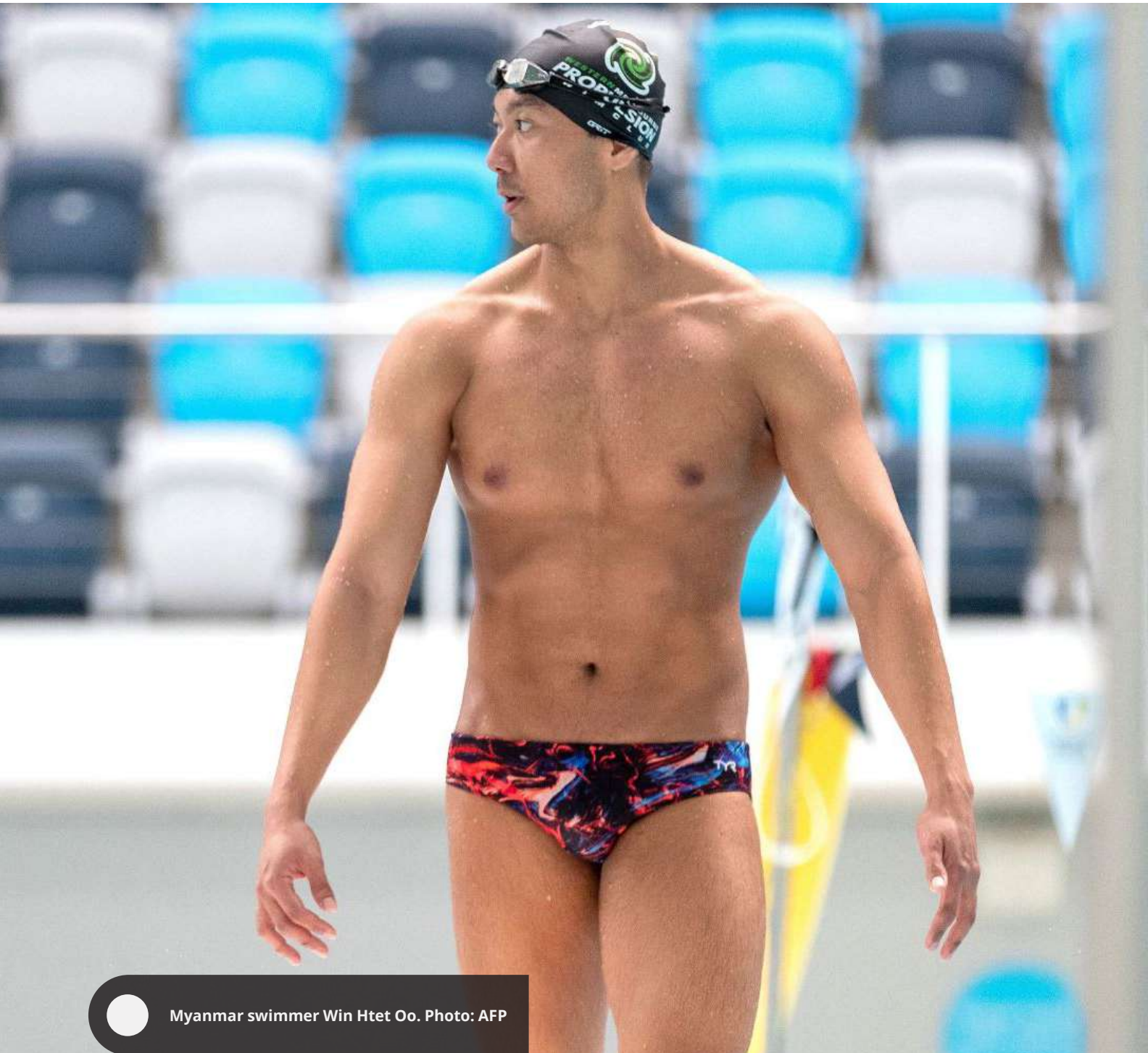
"For me, it's just one person's dream of going to the Olympics, but in Myanmar, millions of young people have witnessed their dreams and aspirations have disappeared," he says.

One of his non-Olympic dreams was to bring youth sports to conflict-racked areas of Myanmar, to help reconcile divided communities.

With the country headed for "a dark future", Win Htet Oo says he feels compelled to join the fight for democracy -- much to the dismay of his immediate family in Australia.

"As soon as travel restrictions lift I want to come to Myanmar to continue the struggle -- if it is at all possible," he says. "That's what I think about every day."

AFP



Myanmar swimmer Win Htet Oo. Photo: AFP

WAI MOE NAING CHARGED WITH THE KILLING OF TWO POLICE OFFICERS IN MONYWA



Wai Moe Naing speaking at a democracy rally. Photo: Facebook



A prominent leader of the protest movement against Myanmar's military junta has been charged with several crimes, including murder, high treason and unlawful assembly, state TV reported last week, RT reported.

Wai Moe Naing was arrested during a rally in the city of Monywa earlier this month.

He has been charged by the junta with the killing of two police officers in Monywa in March and faces a total of five charges, carrying a potential 28-year prison sentence, according to his lawyer Moe Zaw Htun.

Wai Moe Naing is set to appear at a hearing on May 7 and is in good health, his lawyer said.

UN FAILS TO AGREE ON MYANMAR STATEMENT, DIPLOMATS BLAME CHINA, RUSSIA

The UN Security Council failed to agree last week on a joint statement on the crisis in Myanmar after a closed-door meeting, with diplomats blaming Beijing - the junta's main backer - and Russia for raising objections and putting forward their own competing text.

The session was convened by Vietnam to present the conclusions of a recent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Indonesia. ASEAN is to appoint an envoy to help resolve the crisis sparked by the February 1 coup by the Myanmar military.

During the meeting, the UN Special Envoy to Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, who is currently touring the region, gave a report on her long meeting with Myanmar junta leader General Min Aung Hlaing, held on the sidelines of the ASEAN meeting.

Diplomats said the envoy, who is currently based in Bangkok, once again had her request for a visit to Myanmar denied.

During the meeting, Brunei, which currently holds the presidency of ASEAN, floated the idea of a joint visit to Myanmar by the UN envoy and her future ASEAN counterpart.

A draft Security Council declaration, drawn up by Britain, failed to win full endorsement as it stood.

A copy obtained by AFP showed that it planned to give "full support for the central role of ASEAN" and to encourage a visit to Myanmar by Schraner Burgener "as soon as possible."

It said that members of the Security Council "once again strongly condemned violence against peaceful protestors" and "reiterated their call

on the military to exercise utmost restraint."

But diplomats said China and Russia objected to the British draft and proposed their own short competing text, which proved unacceptable to the majority of the Security Council.

Discussions were still underway for a merger of the two draft statements on Friday, diplomats said.

Nearly 760 civilians have been killed by police and soldiers in the past three months, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

The junta puts the death toll at 258 dead by April 15, calling the demonstrators "rioters" who engaged in "acts of terrorism".

AFP



UN Security Council meeting. Photo: EPA

UN MYANMAR EXPERT URGES JUNTA CHIEF TO END VIOLENCE

The UN's top expert on rights in Myanmar has challenged junta chief Min Aung Hlaing to commit publicly to ending violence in the country.

Thomas Andrews, United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, wrote an open letter to the senior general, urging him to tell the country's people they were free to oppose his rule without fear of injury or arbitrary arrest.

Since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, Myanmar has been in an uproar with near-daily protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement.

Min Aung Hlaing attended a weekend meeting of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations -- his first overseas trip since he seized power -- called to discuss the mounting crisis.

ASEAN leaders at the Jakarta summit issued a "five-point consensus" statement that called for the "immediate cessation of violence" and a visit to Myanmar by a regional special envoy.

At the meeting, "you reportedly agreed, through a consensus document released at the conclusion of the meeting, to an 'immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar'," Andrews wrote to the junta chief.

"This is an imperative first-step toward ending a crisis that has already cost more than 750 lives, including the lives of young children, at the hands of Myanmar's security forces."

The letter went on to press him for a public commitment to it.

Andrews also urged Min Aung Hlaing to act on appeals made by Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin to release all political prisoners detained since February 1 promptly and unconditionally.

AFP



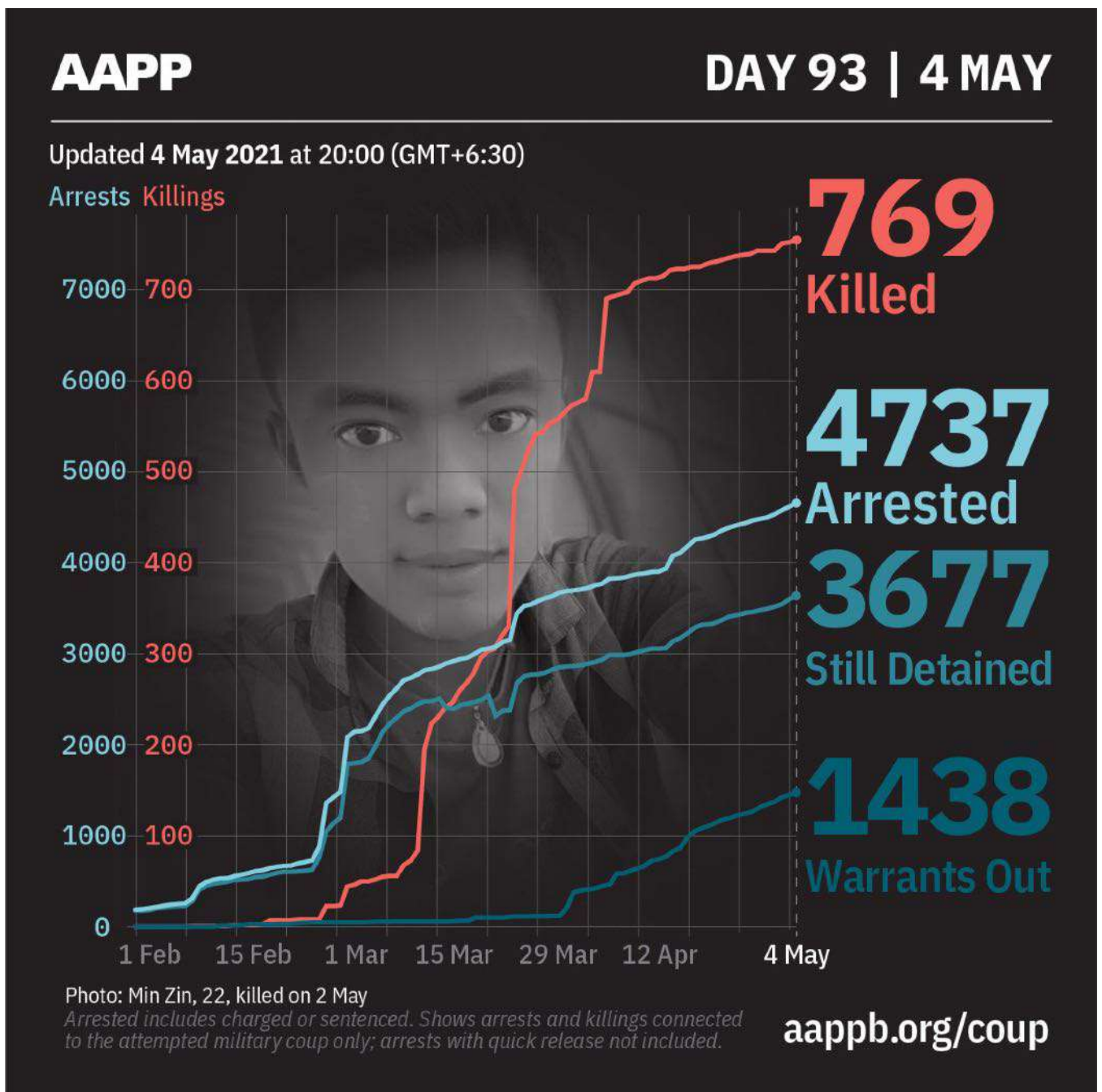
Thomas Andrews, United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar. Photo: Video screenshot

RIGHTS GROUP CALLS TO END THREAT TO MYANMAR'S AAPP

Human Rights Watch has said Myanmar's military junta should immediately stop threatening the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a leading human rights monitoring group.

AAPP has documented security force abuses since the February 1, 2021 coup, including killings of protesters, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, and unjust court convictions.

On April 26, the Home Affairs Ministry of the ruling State Administration Council (SAC) accused the AAPP of operating illegally because it was not registered as an organization. The junta's announcement threatened "severe



action" against the group for causing "State service personnel and public panic" that will "incite the occurrence of more riots" and "harm State stability, rule of law and restoration of law and order."

"While the world's media and diplomats regularly cite the AAPP's daily updates on the military crackdown, Myanmar's generals are desperately trying to silence the group to keep the truth from getting out," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The threats are part of the junta's shroud of silence and censorship, targeting frontline groups like AAPP, arresting journalists, and shutting down the internet."

The junta's efforts to target the AAPP are illustrated in the 115-page briefing paper, obtained by Human Rights Watch, that the junta leader, Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, presented to leaders at the ASEAN summit in Jakarta on April 24. Min Aung Hlaing claimed, without providing evidence, that the AAPP uses "data" that "appeared in fake and hoax news." He added that the junta was "very upset" that "world media and international organizations restated" that information.

Responding to the allegations, AAPP Secretary-General Bo Kyi, a recipient of the Human Rights Watch Alison des Forges Defender Award in 2009, told *The Irrawaddy* magazine that: "I think it is just a political move as international governments, media and UN are referencing our data ... The key issue is the violence they have committed, their killing and arrests. Instead of solving those problems, they are targeting a group like ours which is revealing the true events." The AAPP told Human Rights Watch that the military's threats have forced them to close their office in Yangon and compelled their staff to go into hiding and work from undisclosed locations.

The junta has also arbitrarily arrested journalists to prevent reporting on the opposition Civil Disobedience Movement's broad-based resistance to the coup and the security force abuses. UNESCO reported that the junta has arrested at least 71 journalists since the coup. The AAPP says that 48 journalists are currently known to be in detention, most in undisclosed locations without access to their families or legal counsel. Many other journalists have fled to border regions controlled by ethnic groups, or to neighboring

"While the world's media and diplomats regularly cite the AAPP's daily updates on the military crackdown, Myanmar's generals are desperately trying to silence the group to keep the truth from getting out," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

countries.

The junta has brought charges against numerous journalists and activists under revised penal code provisions adopted on February 14. The State Administration Council inserted a new provision, section 505A, that could be used to punish comments regarding the illegitimacy of the coup or the military government, among others. The new section would criminalize comments that "cause fear," spread "false news, [or] agitates directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a Government employee." Violation of the section is punishable with up to three years in prison. The law arbitrarily interferes with the exercise of rights protected under international law, including freedom of expression.

The junta has also increased pressure on independent media outlets by revoking their operating

licenses. On March 8, the State Administration Council announced that it had cancelled the licenses of Mizzima, Myanmar Now, 7Day News, Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), and Khit Thit Media. While these media groups have continued to report on events, they do so at great risk since journalists working for these outlets face immediate arrest if they are discovered doing their jobs as reporters.

"Groups like the AAPP and the independent media are playing a critical role holding Myanmar's junta accountable, and they need to be able to continue their work," Robertson said. "Governments concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar should be offering public support for these organizations and their brave staff members."

MYANMAR A CORE CONCERN ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Serious concerns are being expressed about the situation of reporting from Myanmar as the world marked World Press Freedom Day on May 1.

The International Press Institute issued the following statement about press freedom around the world with particular attention to Myanmar.

Here is the full press release:

WPDF 2021: Attacks on press freedom growing bolder amid rising authoritarianism

Collective action needed to stop domino effect of silencing independent media

Vienna, May 1 - Authoritarian and illiberal-minded regimes are becoming increasingly emboldened in their efforts to stifle independent media, the International Press Institute (IPI) warned ahead of World Press Freedom Day 2021.

Brutal crackdowns on the press are unfolding openly across the globe. After seizing power in a coup on February 1, Myanmar's military junta has arrested more than 70 journalists, revoked licences of independent media outlets, and repeatedly blocked internet access.

In Belarus, the regime of President Alexander Lukashenko launched a campaign to criminalize reporting on protests against last year's fraudulent election. Local watchdogs have recorded over 550 attacks on journalists, including hundreds of detentions, since the vote.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government has accelerated an unprecedented effort to eradicate fundamental freedoms, including press freedom, in Hong Kong. Beijing has targeted prominent critical journalists, like Apply Daily publisher Jimmy Lai, as it transforms the territory into an outpost of its centralized authoritarianism.

The coronavirus pandemic has aided the negative trend as governments use the public health crisis to restrict reporting. Authorities have blocked access to information, arrested journalists for their coverage of the virus, and passed sweeping "fake news" laws that can be used to silence criticism. IPI's COVID-19 Press Freedom Tracker has recorded 635 press freedom violations around the world. India, which is battling a major wave of infections, has seen 84 violations - more than any other country.

"The rise in open attacks on press freedom and the targeting of journalists in dictatorial and illiberal-minded regimes around the world is an ominous sign for the future of democratic freedoms", IPI Executive Director Barbara Trionfi said.

"Press freedom is under assault everywhere we look, with tactics and methods for doing so being shared and copied by governments. Anti-democratic regimes increasingly feel that they can silence the media with impunity. This has a domino effect, encouraging other states to follow suit."

She added: "The coronavirus pandemic and the accompanying states of emergency have provided in some cases a cover for governments to usher in new systems and norms that invite censorship and self-censorship. There is a clear risk that many of these norms will outlast the virus and become permanent fixtures. Now is the time to ensure that any rights restrictions are strictly necessary, proportionate and time-limited."

"The pandemic has also reminded us of how important independent journalism is precisely in moments of crisis. We need an urgent, collective



Myanmar photographers at a demonstration. Photo: EPA

response by the international community – both states and civil society – to robustly defend press freedom as a pillar of free and democratic societies, and to stop the domino effect knocking down the public's right to independent news and information."

Authoritarianism on the march

A rise in authoritarianism and so-called "illiberal" democracy is contributing to a global decline in press freedom. Myanmar, Belarus and China are far from alone in their blatant repression of journalism.

Elsewhere in Asia, pressure on media freedom has grown in the Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte, with new charges brought against prominent journalist and IPI Board member Maria Ressa and the forced closure of critical broadcaster ABS-CBN. Meanwhile, India's increasingly illiberal government, stung by widespread criticism in the media over its response to the pandemic and the large-scale farmers' protest, has stepped up legal harassment of journalists, notably through its notorious sedition law. Indian media outlets are challenging new rules covering digital media, warning of government censorship. Journalists in Indian-administered Kashmir continue to face an agonizing clampdown aimed at controlling news related to the territory.

In Africa, the re-election in January of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, in office for nearly 35 years, was marred by accusations of fraud and more than 100 attacks on journalists in the run-up to the vote. Just hours before the vote, Ugandan authorities brazenly cut off access to the entire internet to stifle public access to information. While Egypt finally released Al Jazeera correspondent Mahmoud Hussein in February, dozens more reporters remain behind bars. Legal proceedings against them are a mockery of due process.

Europe is not immune from the authoritarian turn. Hungary, a European Union member state, continued its dismantling of media freedom by kicking the country's last independent radio broadcaster, Klubrádió, off the air. Its media capture methods are now being exported to other countries in the region, especially Poland, where a state-controlled oil company purchased the largest network of

regional newspapers. Turkey, which remains a leading jailer of journalists, strong-armed online platforms into complying with a new law that facilitates digital censorship.

In Latin America, the regime of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua continues its war on the free press, shutting down access to information even as the COVID-19 pandemic spread. Journalists in the country face prosecution, surveillance, harassment and threats.

COVID-19 accelerates negative trends

The COVID-19 pandemic has delivered a debilitating blow to press freedom across the globe. Governments have tried to stifle independent media, while an alarming number of journalists have come under attacks for their coverage of the health crisis. So far, IPI's COVID-19 Press Freedom Tracker has recorded 635 press freedom violations around the world.

Overall, over 200 violations linked to the pandemic were reported in the Asia-Pacific region, of which about half were from four South Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal. Seventy-one journalists faced arrests and charges for their coverage of the pandemic and its consequences in those countries, while 32 cases of physical attacks and verbal threats were reported.

Africa ranks second in terms of arrests and charges against journalists and media outlets. Zimbabwe reported the greatest number of arrests in the region, including that of prominent investigative journalist Hopewell Chin'ono. He was first arrested in July last year for exposing COVID-related procurement fraud within the country's health ministry.

An alarming number of physical and verbal attacks on journalists were recorded in Europe. A total of 112 cases of attacks have been registered, of which more than 80 percent were by members of the public. Journalists were targeted while covering public demonstrations against lockdowns and other pandemic-related measures.

Numerous states imposed restrictions on access to information, preventing journalists from speaking to health officials or medical workers, or blocking independent media from attending press conferences. Restrictions on access to information

were particularly evident in Latin America, where Venezuela and Honduras topped IPI's Press Freedom Tracker in terms of numbers of violations.

New "fake news" laws were enacted in at least 18 jurisdictions. Sold as efforts to combat disinformation about the health crisis, these laws provide governments with new tools to control the flow of news and information. Most recently, the Malaysian government took advantage of emergency powers to bypass parliament and introduce a regressive new regulation providing up to three years in prison for "fake news" on the pandemic or the state of emergency itself. Russia introduced legislation that imposes a fine of up to €21,000 and a five-year prison term for spreading "false information".

Almost 50 journalists killed in the past year

At least 49 journalists were killed over the last 12 months, according to IPI's Death Watch. Of those, as many as 43 were murdered in retaliation for their work. Three journalists were killed covering armed conflict and one died while reporting on civil unrest. Two journalists were killed on assignment.

With nine cases Afghanistan had the greatest number of targeted killings over the past year, including three women working for Enikass TV who were shot dead on March 2 as they were on their way home. In Mexico, six journalists were killed in targeted attacks, mostly for their reports on drug cartels and organized crime.

Impunity remains the norm for killings of journalists around the world. While triggermen are occasionally sentenced for their roles, the masterminds of journalist murders almost never face justice.

In February, U.S. intelligence released a report concluding that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman had approved the heinous assassination of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018. Bin Salman and Saudi Arabia have faced no meaningful consequences for the murder – underscoring the lack of accountability for even the most brazen attacks on the press.

MYANMAR'S MILITARY MUST IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY RELEASE ALL OF THE JOURNALISTS DETAINED - CPJ

Myanmar's military junta must immediately and unconditionally release all of the journalists detained since the country's February 1 coup, and should stop using legal threats to harass and intimidate the media, the Committee to Protect Journalists said last Friday.

Preliminary investigations by CPJ found at least 40 journalists imprisoned as of yesterday, the majority detained during newsroom raids or while covering anti-coup street protests.

CPJ is researching those cases to confirm the circumstances of the journalists' arrests and their current status in detention. The preliminary data is based on independent reporting, news reports, and data shared with CPJ by the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners, a local rights group, and the Democratic

Voice of Burma (DVB), an independent news organization that the junta has officially banned.

"Myanmar's military regime has almost overnight become one of the worst jailers of journalists worldwide, with at least 40 members of the press held behind bars," said Shawn Crispin, CPJ's senior Southeast Asia representative. "The jailing of dozens of journalists is blunt and inhumane censorship, aimed at keeping Myanmar's citizens, and the global public, in the dark about the junta's often brutal activities."

All but two of the detainees identified by CPJ are local journalists working for local outlets, with arrests and imprisonments documented in the cities of Yangon, Mandalay, Myintkyina, Taunggyi, Patheingyi, Myeik, Pyaw, Dawei, and Myaungmya.

CPJ has confirmed the detentions

"Myanmar's military regime has almost overnight become one of the worst jailers of journalists worldwide, with at least 40 members of the press held behind bars," said Shawn Crispin, CPJ's senior Southeast Asia representative.



of at least two foreign members of the press: Japanese journalist Yuki Kitazumi and American Nathan Maung, editor of the local news outlet Kamayut Media, who was arrested while covering an anti-coup protest on March 9.

Over half of those detained face charges under Article 505(a) of the penal code, a broad provision that criminalizes the dissemination of information or “fake news” that could agitate or cause security forces or officials to mutiny. Convictions under that provision allow for maximum three-year prison penalties.

Many of the detainees have

been denied access to a lawyer or family members since their arrests, according to the Democratic Voice of Burma. Two DVB reporters are among those detained, according to Aye Chan Naing, the news organization’s editor-in-chief, who communicated with CPJ by email.

In March, the junta revoked the operating licenses of five privately run news outlets—Mizzima, Myanmar Now, 7Day News, DVB, and Khit Thit Media—and raided several of their bureaus to enforce the ban, as CPJ documented at the time.


Military authorities also in March charged The Irrawaddy under Article

505(a) over its publication of a video that allegedly showed police officers asking the family members of arrested protesters to pay for their release. The military-run Myanmar Radio and Television claimed the video report was false.

On April 6, CPJ addressed a public letter to junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing calling on his regime to release all journalists detained in the wake of the February 1 coup.

The Ministry of Information did not immediately reply to CPJ’s emailed request for comment on the number of journalists currently held in detention.



 The notorious Insein Prison in Yangon. Photo: EPA

US LOOKS TO RAMP UP OXYGEN IN INDIA AID PUSH

The United States is looking to help India quickly and sharply scale up oxygen supplies available for Covid patients as it rushes in aid, officials said Thursday.

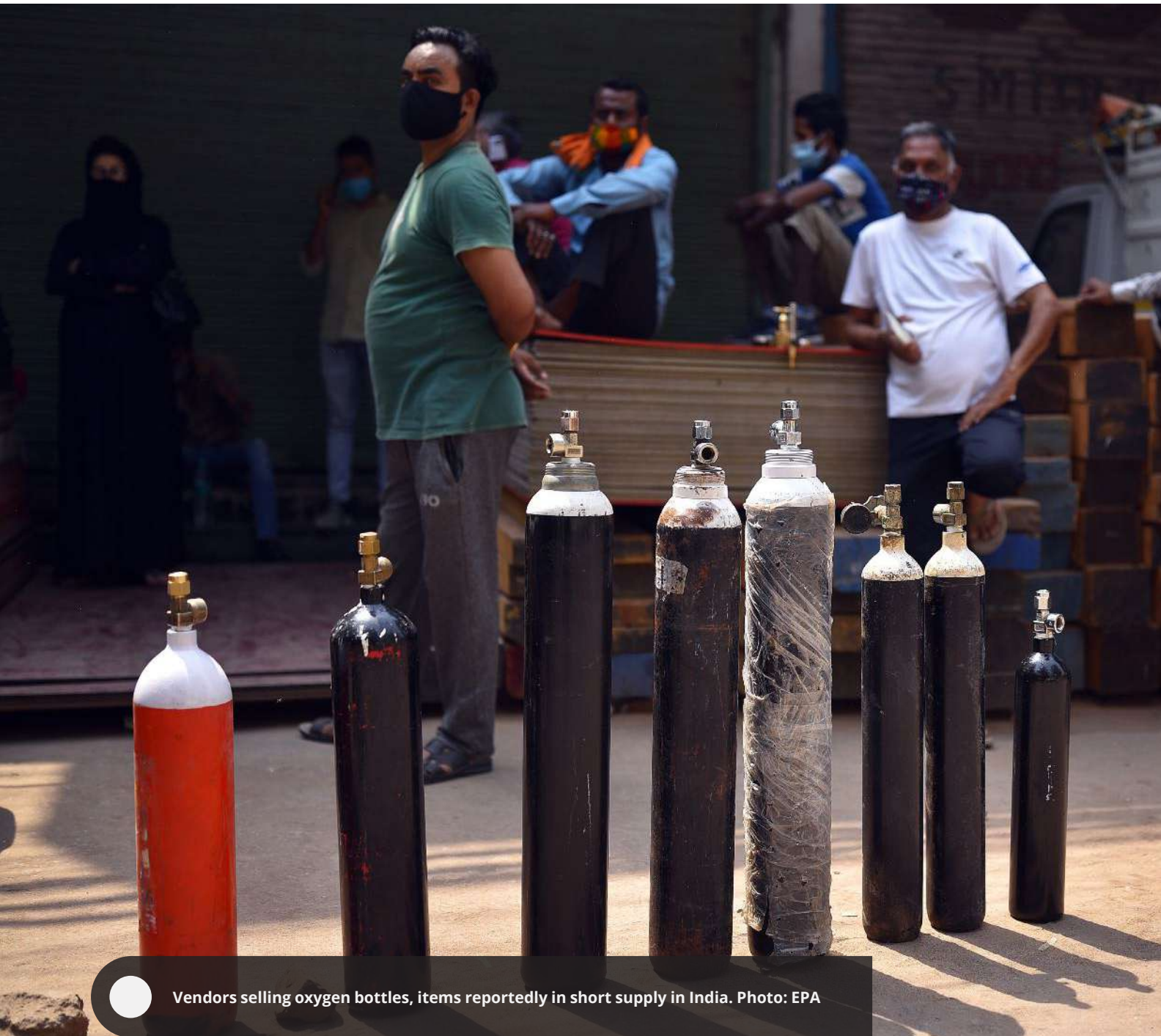
A first military plane loaded with emergency supplies including nearly

one million instant tests and 100,000 N95 masks was arriving early Friday in New Delhi, part of what the White House said was more than \$100 million in support.

The first priority "is to try and serve some immediate needs to

address some of the acute challenges that they're having in their hospitals," said Jeremy Konyndyk, executive director for the Covid task force at the US Agency for International Development.

"I think we're cognizant that that's



Vendors selling oxygen bottles, items reportedly in short supply in India. Photo: EPA

a sort of stopgap approach and we also need to support them to address some of the underlying challenges, which is really about the volume of medical-grade oxygen that the country can produce," he told AFP.

The United States is in talks with India on identifying how to expand the "oxygen supply chain" including developing the technologies to convert industrial-grade oxygen for medical use and improving ways to transport it throughout the country.

The United States has also pledged assistance to India with vaccines, but Konyndyk said that giving shots was more of a medium-



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term measure faced with the soaring cases in the billion-plus country.

"In the immediate term, there's just not enough vaccine supply in the world, much less the ability to rapidly put in arms, to get control of this sort of surge," he said.

President Joe Biden's administration said Monday it would release overseas up to 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, which has not been approved for use in the United States.

But several days later, the United States has not yet decided how many doses to send to India and other countries.

Konyndyk said the modalities still needed approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

The Biden administration in the meantime has said is shipping to India the supplies to produce more than 20 million doses of Covishield, a low-cost version of AstraZeneca developed in India.

Biden has faced criticism from development activists for not sharing vaccines more quickly as the United States is expected soon to face a glut of doses after rapid success at home.

India -- facing the devastation despite being a major vaccine manufacturer -- has also pressed unsuccessfully for the United States to ease rules on intellectual property for Covid vaccines.

AFP

FILIPINO INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST TO RECEIVE UN PRESS FREEDOM PRIZE

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Tuesday named investigative journalist and media executive Maria Ressa of the Philippines as the recipient of its 2021 press freedom award.

For over three decades, Ms. Ressa has been involved in many initiatives to promote press freedom and currently manages the online outlet, Rappler. Her work however, also made her a target for attacks and abuse, UNESCO – the UN agency tasked with defending press freedom – said in a news release.

Ms. Ressa was chosen for the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize following the recommendation of an international jury of media professionals.

“Maria Ressa’s unerring fight for freedom of expression is an example for many journalists around the world. Her case is emblematic of global trends that represent a real threat to press freedom, and therefore to democracy”, Marilu Mastrogiovanni, Chair of the Prize’s international jury and an investigative journalist from Italy, said.

The award ceremony will take place on 2 May in Windhoek, Namibia, during the World Press Freedom Day Global Conference. It will be streamed online.

According to UNESCO, Ms. Ressa has been arrested for “alleged crimes related to the exercise of her profession”, and has been subject to a sustained campaign of gendered online abuse, threats and harassment, which at one point, resulted in her

The award ceremony will take place on 2 May in Windhoek, Namibia, during the World Press Freedom Day Global Conference. It will be streamed online.



receiving an average of over 90 hateful messages an hour on Facebook.

The former lead investigative journalist for Asia at CNN and head of ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs, Ms. Ressa was also among a group of journalists named as Time Magazine's person of the year in 2018.

UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

UNESCO's press freedom prize is named after Guillermo Cano Isaza, the Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogotá, Colombia, on 17 December

1986.

The \$25,000 Prize recognizes outstanding contributions to the defence or promotion of press freedom, especially in the face of danger.

It is funded by the Guillermo Cano Isaza Foundation (Colombia), the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation (Finland) and the Namibia Media Trust.

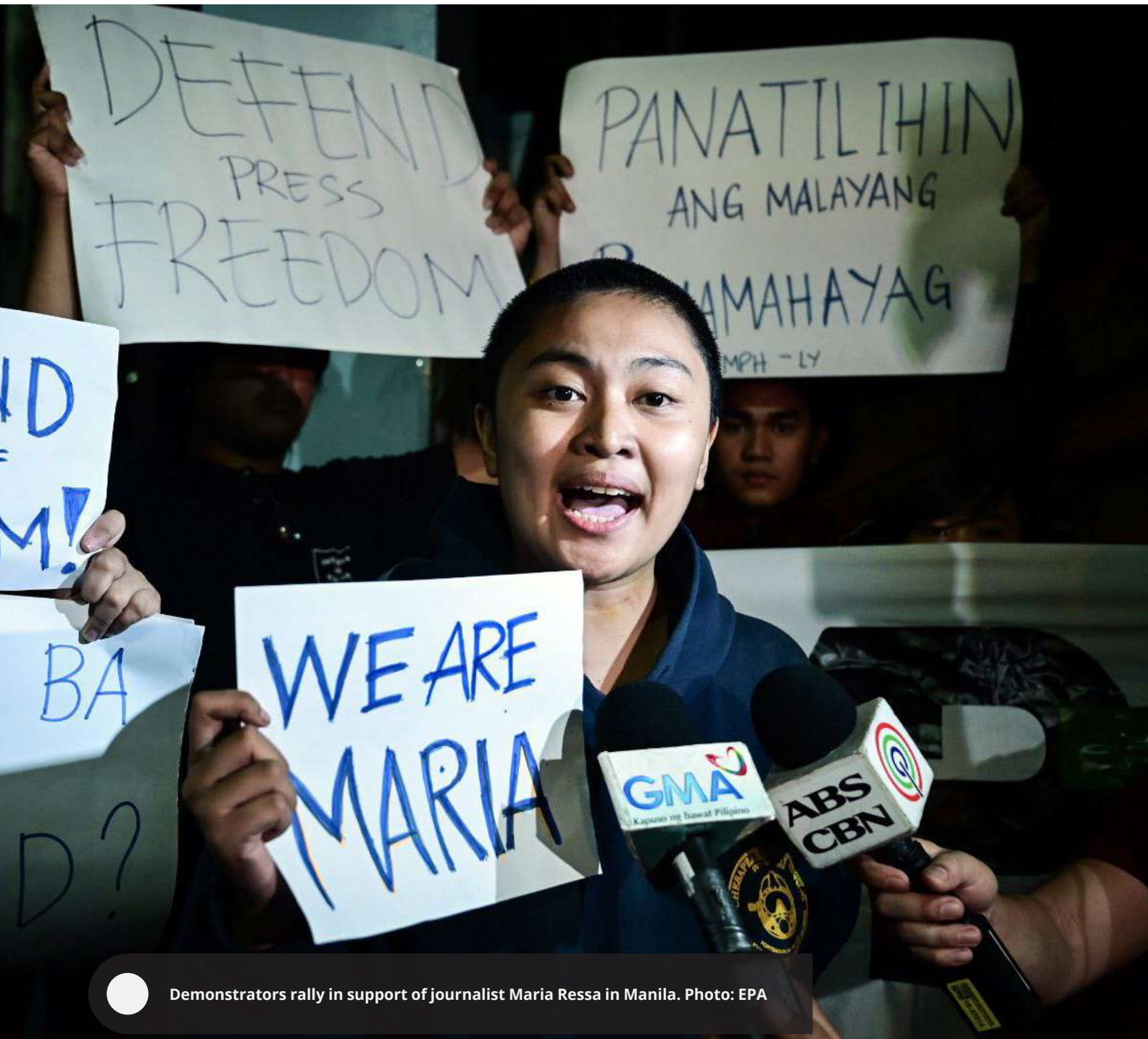
Information as a public good

Hosted by UNESCO and the Government of Namibia, the 2021 World Press Freedom Day Global

Conference will be held from 29 April to 3 May under the theme of information as a public good, and will focus on topics such as transparency of online platforms and the importance of media and information literacy.

The conference will also tackle ways to promote and support independent media struggling to survive a crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when national and local media everywhere face financial instability and other pressures threatening their survival and their journalists' jobs.

Courtesy of UN News



Demonstrators rally in support of journalist Maria Ressa in Manila. Photo: EPA

HUMANITY TAKING 'COLOSSAL RISK' WITH OUR FUTURE: NOBELS

Marlowe Hood

The failure to halt climate change, the destruction of nature and other intertwined global crises poses an existential risk to humanity, ten Nobel laureates said Thursday following the first-ever Nobel Prize Summit.

Only profound changes in the way society produces, distributes and consumes almost everything -- starting with energy -- can forestall potentially catastrophic changes, they said in a joint statement, also signed by 20 other top thinkers.

"We need to reinvent our relationship with planet Earth," the statement said. "Without transformational action this decade, humanity is taking colossal risks with our common future."

The risks of pandemics, they noted, are now greater due to destruction of natural habitats, highly networked societies, and the spread of fake news on social networks.

The Nobel winners said societies must repair and restore the "global commons" that have allowed our species to flourish -- the climate, ice, land, ocean, freshwater, forests, soils, and rich diversity of life that regulate the state of the planet.

"There is now an existential need to build economies and societies that support Earth system harmony rather than disrupt it," they warned.

"The next decade is crucial: global greenhouse gas emissions need to be

cut by half and destruction of nature halted and reversed."

The amount of CO2 humanity can emit and still cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius -- our "carbon budget" -- will be exhausted before 2030, scientists have calculated.

Earth's average global temperature has already gone up 1.2C compared to preindustrial levels.

At the same time, energy needs are increasing: every week until 2050 Earth's urban population will increase by about 1.3 million.

The Nobel signatories included economists Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University and Oliver Hart from Harvard, biophysicists William Moerner from Stanford and Jacques Dubochet of Lausanne University, and astrophysicist Brian Schmidt of the Australian National University.

'Last generation that can act'

There is no Nobel Prize for environmental or Earth science.

"What we are doing amounts to an uncontrolled experiment on Earth's life-support system," said Earth system scientist Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and a signatory of the statement.

"We are the last generation with a reasonable chance of retaining long-term stability of critical parts of the Earth system."

The planet has sent up one red flag after another of a climate system teetering on the edge of dangerous tipping points, the statement said.

Parts of the Antarctic ice sheet may have already crossed irreversible melting thresholds, and the circulation of North Atlantic currents that ensure temperate winters in Europe has slowed.

Rainforests, permafrost and coral reefs are similarly approaching tipping points.

Widening inequality and distortions in the distribution of information have also reached the level of global crises, the Nobels cautioned.

"These supranational crises are interlinked and threaten the enormous gains we have made in human progress," they wrote.

Humanity is only now "waking up late" to these challenges but still has time to act, the statement said, outlining seven critical areas.

Biologists Linda Buck at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and Elizabeth H. Blackburn from the University of California at San Francisco, along with virologist Charles Rice from The Rockefeller University, also signed.

AFP



Photo: EPA

KEY WORKERS NEED GREATER PROTECTIONS AMIDST COVID FIGHT, NEW ILO REPORT WARNS

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the workplace dangers faced by key workers who need far greater protection to do their jobs safely, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said on Tuesday.

A new report by the ILO, released to mark World Day for Safety and Health at Work, found that 7,000 health workers have died since the outbreak of the crisis, while 136 million health and social care workers are at risk of contracting COVID-19 through work.

The document, *Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises*. Invest now in resilient OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) systems, looks at how countries can minimize the risks for everyone in the workplace, in the event of future health emergencies.

It also highlights the mental health pressures associated with the pandemic: one in five healthcare workers globally, has reported depression and anxiety symptoms.

Strong, resilient safety systems

The report outlines the critical roles played during the pandemic by strong workplace guidance backed by enforcement, and calls for them to be dovetailed with national crisis emergency plans.

“There could be no clearer demonstration of the importance of a strong, resilient, occupational safety and health environment. Recovery and prevention will require better national policies, institutional and regulatory frameworks, properly integrated into crisis response frameworks”, said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.



Pros and cons of teleworking

It's not only health and care sectors that have proven to be sources of COVID-19 outbreaks.

Many workplaces where staff are in closed environments or spend time in close proximity with each other - including in shared accommodation or transport - are affected.

And while teleworking has been essential in limiting the spread of the virus, it has also blurred the lines between work and private life, adding to people's mental stress.

Sixty-five per cent of enterprises surveyed by the ILO and the G20 OSH Network, focused on occupational safety, reported that worker morale has been difficult to sustain while teleworking.

The report stated that small and micro-sized enterprises have often found it hard to meet official safety-at-work requirements because many have lacked the resources to adapt to the threats posed by the pandemic.

In the informal economy, the UN agency warned that many of the world's 1.6 billion workers in the sector, especially in developing countries, have continued working despite lockdowns, restrictions on movement and social interaction.

This has put them at high risk of catching the virus, yet most do not have access to basic social protection, such as sick leave or sick pay.

Social dialogue is key

International labour standards (ILS) offer specific guidance on how to respond to these challenges and

reduce the risk of virus transmission in the workplace, the report says.

They provide tools to implement safety-first measures and to ensure that workers, employers and Governments, can maintain decent work, while adjusting to the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

ILS also encourage social dialogue as the best way to ensure that procedures and protocols are effectively implemented and accepted, the report concludes.

Courtesy of UN News



A shop worker in Manila. Photo: ILO/UN News



Photo: Loreintiu Morariu

CHIN STATE

As many as 15 Myanmar soldiers were killed in western Chin state Monday by a newly formed ethnic militia the Chinland Defense Force (CDF) witnesses and a local rights group said, RFA reported. "As many as 15 Burmese soldiers have reportedly been killed in a firefight with local civilian militia in Mindat, southern Chin state," the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) said on its Facebook page. A truck was also seen burning in the town, the group said. The CHRO said about 10 of the slain soldiers were in a convoy of three trucks sent as reinforcements from the army's Tactical Operations Command headquarters in nearby Matupi town, while five other troops were reported killed in Mindat, a town of 10,000 people.

KAREN STATE

In the early hours of Tuesday, soldiers from the KNU's Fifth Brigade attacked and razed a military outpost in eastern Karen state near the Salween river -- which demarcates part of the border shared with Thailand. The attack was confirmed by both the KNU and junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun, who vowed to "take action". By around noon, the military retaliated by launching air strikes north of the base, according to Sithichai Jindaluang, the Thai governor of bordering Mae Hong Son province. "Thailand does not support either side but concentrates on ensuring the safety of Thai nationals," he said. His province has also devised a "refugees management plan". Sithichai added that a stateless woman who lives in Mae Sam Laep was shot in the leg, caught in the crossfire. She was treated at hospital and in a stable condition, he said. Last month, after the KNU overran a military outpost in the same region, the junta responded with multiple air strikes at night. Since then, fighting between the two sides has displaced some 24,000 civilians, including more than 2,000 who crossed the river to seek refuge in Thailand before they were pushed back by border authorities. Villagers on the Thai side of the border had already fled their homes, said Hkara, an ethnic Karen resident, adding that she heard explosions and gunfire from inside Myanmar around 5 am. "Nobody dares to stay," she said.

AFP

PEACE PROCESS

Then ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) prior to the coup will reach out to non-signatory EAOs for talks aimed at forming a coalition, Myanmar Now reported. A seven-person committee was formed to orchestrate the discussions, Col Sai Nguen, a spokesperson of the NCA-signatory EAOs' Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) told Myanmar Now. Col Sai Nguen, who is also an officer within the Restoration Council of Shan State, said that the negotiations committee would approach groups such as the Kachin Independence Army, United Wa State Army, Shan State Progress Party, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Arakan Army and the Karenni National Progressive Party about working together against the junta.



Photo: Hong Sar for Mizzima

Bomb explosions in Pyinmana

A junta policeman was injured by a bomb explosion at around 7:30 am on May 5 in Paunglaung 2 ward in Phymana Township in Nay Pyi Taw, according to local news. The bomb blast occurred near a tea shop, according to a resident, who said that a police car was slightly damaged. It is learnt that another bomb blast also occurred outside an agricultural school in Pyinmana on May 5, but no causality was reported in that case. At the time of this writing, residents often staged anti-coup protests in Pyinmana despite the junta's crackdowns. Many explosions had occurred across Myanmar since mid-April. On May 4, two time-bombs exploded outside the new Moe Kaung Treasure Maternal and Child Hospital, which was recently opened by the junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

S KOREAN COMPANY POSCO TO CONTINUE GAS FIELD BUSINESS IN MYANMAR

South Korean steelmaker Posco said last week that it will continue to operate a gas field business in Myanmar as it announced that first quarter operating profit more than doubled thanks to rising steel prices amid strong global demand and production cuts in China, according to Nikkei Asia.

According to the report, Posco,

South Korea's largest steelmaker, said this month that it was cutting its coating business's ties with Myanmar's Myanma Economic Holdings Public Co. due to its relations with the military junta. The military has received widespread international condemnation since it took over the Southeast Asian country on February 1.

However, Posco said money it pays for the gas field business in the form of profit-sharing with Myanmar's state oil and gas company - part of the consortium with Posco - goes to the country's finance ministry, not the military. Posco also said the business is important for the daily life of Myanmar's people, as 20% of the gas is supplied to domestic market.



Photo: POSCO

THAILAND TO TALK TO MYANMAR OVER THAI DRINK LAND-EXPORT BAN

Thailand's Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit is planning to hold urgent talks with Myanmar as Naypyidaw is preparing to ban Thai drink exports worth 10 billion baht via land transport from May 1, according to a report by the Bangkok Post.

The decision is believed to be related to the political mayhem in Myanmar.

All types of drinks, including soft drinks, instant coffee and sweetened condensed milk, will only be allowed for export via ship to Myanmar, which means higher export costs for Thai businesses, according to the newspaper.

It remains unclear why Myanmar is demanding a new transport mode. The move comes after an increase in drink exports to Myanmar earlier this year.

It has been reported that many people in Myanmar want to boycott the purchase of goods from companies linked with the military regime which staged a coup on Feb 1 to topple the civilian government under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, the newspaper says.



Photo: EPA

MILITARY RESTORES CONNECTIVITY FOR SOME MOBILE BANKING APPLICATIONS

The military has restored connectivity for some mobile banking applications and Microsoft's Office 365 services, according to an internal email from telecom operator Telenor that circulated on Facebook since last

week, kr-asia.com reported.

CB Bank, one of Myanmar's largest private institutes, was the first to announce on Tuesday afternoon that digital services, including its money app CB Pay, internet banking, and mobile banking app, can now be

accessed through all mobile network providers including MPT, Ooredoo, Telenor, and Mytel.

The Telenor email, seen by KrASIA, explained that only selected services are available through mobile internet.



Photo: Mizzima

Penrose Thitsa

US senators call on government to impose further sanctions on Myanmar junta

In reaction to Myanmar military junta's coup and bloody crackdown on protesters, a bipartisan group of US senators on April 27 urged the US government to impose further sanctions on the junta, including choking revenues to a state energy corporation, reported Reuters. In a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen; Senators Jeff Merkley (a Democrat) and Marco Rubio (a Republican) and four others called on them to "explore new avenues to support the people of Burma in their ongoing struggle for democracy in the face of escalating crimes against humanity." The senators urged the US government to stop royalties flowing from businesses including U.S. energy major Chevron Corp to Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, or MOGE, a firm within Myanmar's Energy Ministry. MOGE gives financial supports to military leaders, including General Min Aung Hlaing, already under U.S. sanctions. MOGE is a partner in Yadana, a natural gas field in which Chevron has a 28.3% stake. Human rights groups have called on energy companies including Chevron and Total to cut ties to Myanmar after the coup. According to the senators, gas sales from joint ventures with companies like Total and Chevron are the most important single source of foreign exchange revenue for the junta, generating cash payments of about \$1.1 billion annually. The senators proposed the joint ventures pay revenues into a trust to be held until Myanmar has a democratically elected government or to be used for humanitarian purposes.

Central Bank allows people to open new saving accounts for unlimited withdrawals

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM), on 27 April, announced that people can open new saving accounts and unlimited withdrawals within the new accounts, according to local news reports. Presently, all Myanmar banks including privately-owned banks have limited weekly withdrawals from old saving accounts to around Kyat 2,000,000, and only a few people got the token to withdraw that amount. On February 1, the Myanmar military staged the coup and since then the economy of Myanmar had stopped. State-owned and private sectors of Myanmar have been paralyzed. People started worrying that the banks would be collapsed. In the public panic, the people of Myanmar made a massive withdrawal of money, and then the banks had to set daily and weekly withdrawal limits, which accelerate more panic. So, as a move to solve the banking crisis in Myanmar, the CBM announced the new rule that people can open new saving accounts for unlimited withdrawals. The move is intended to attract people to make deposits in their new accounts.

IN FOCUS





THE HOT SEASON

A farmer looks after her cattle outside the city of Mandalay. Photo: Season M Torrazzina

MYANMAR TEAMS PULL OUT OF TOURNAMENTS AMID POST-COUP VIOLENCE



Members of one of Myanmar's football teams take to streets to demonstrate. Photo: EPA



Two Myanmar football teams have withdrawn from Asian tournaments, officials said last Friday, as the country grapples with violence following a military coup in February.

Shan United FC have pulled out of the AFC Champions League, the continent's top club competition, while Hantharwady United FC have withdrawn from the AFC Cup, the second-tier continental club tournament.

Announcing the news, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said it "acknowledged the challenges as well as the present complexities" caused by the situation in Myanmar.

A preliminary stage match between Shan United and Melbourne City FC has been axed, and the Australian side now advance automatically to the playoff round, they said.

Hantharwady United's playoff match has been cancelled.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the generals seized power, ousting civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and unleashing a wave of near-daily street protests calling for a return to democracy.

AFP



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