



Hell in 2021: Myanmar Under the Military Junta After the Coup





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Research Methodology

This research paper is based on the analysis of previously released research papers, reports, and statements. Factual data and cases are based on daily selective collections of independent media sources and information published by the Assistant Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). Deductive data analysis was conducted during the research.

Brief Background

Myanmar saw 2020 as a worrying year precluding tremendous concerns and sufferings due to the global coronavirus pandemic as the country officially confirmed its first COVID-19 case, on 23 March 2021, leading to a halt in education and school activities, some business firms, social and festive events, and bereavements among the families. In fact, 2020 was a distressing year for both Myanmar and the global community. However, 2021 was a living hell where Myanmar people had to live in complete fear.

Myanmar's fight for democracy was strenuous and arduous in the past. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, leader of Myanmar's military, seized the power again only a decade after Myanmar people sought solace in meager democracy scanted by the 2008 Constitution under the military's domination, on 1 February, thrusting more than 50 million Myanmar people into an abyss of darkness, the burden of fear and deadly arena. Immediate nationwide disruption of internet connectivity, telecommunications, radio channels, and TV channels followed the putsch whereby the infamous military arrested national leaders, members of parliament, prominent politicians, and activists.

Brutal Crackdowns on Peaceful Mass Protests

As the very first civil outcry against the coup, on 2 February, people from a number of major cities, townships, and even villages across the country launched pots-and-pans protests – banging pots and pans in unison at a specific time every day – which later metamorphosed into a powerful movement echoing the notable voice of Myanmar people demanding the return of democracy in the international community. The peaceful domestic demonstration of people met intolerance of coup leaders as the junta committed arrests, mulct, and sentence of seven-day imprisonment in different States and Regions. Pots-and-pans protests continue to be reported in some areas as a menace to the dictator till it has been almost a year since the coup.

Along with the pots-and-pans protests, hundreds of thousands of people launched mass street protests against the junta across the country on 4 February. Following the international community's skimpy acknowledgment for the peaceful civil protests and lack of effective responses to the coup, the ferocious military brought about the outset of mass killings by using real bullets in crackdowns on mass protests in Naypyidaw on 9 February. Then, the lackeys of the junta – police force and regime troops – have been orchestrating more increasingly brutal oppressions which included firing rubber bullets, arrests, imprisonments, shooting the protesters with real bullets in their heads, and ramming vehicles into unarmed protests in a more evident manner. An analysis of Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) indicated that protests encountered violent crackdowns around the world in 2021 and



more than 60 percent of protests violently dispersed in 2021 was in Myanmar¹, with killing more than 520 protesters, the highest toll of deaths, in March alone.²

Detention and Arrest Warrants on Civil Disobedience Movement Campaigners

In addition to street demonstrations and pots-and-pans protests, the civil disobedience movement (CDM) launched by the civil servants has persisted and almost every fundamental part of government mechanism including the banking system ceased as many public employees from the Department of Health, Department of Transport, and Department of Education followed the slogan of the movement, “Don’t attend office anymore, struggle out to leave!”.

On 10 March, junta troops and police raided Ma Hlwa Gone locomotive (railway engine) factory compound in Yangon’s Mingalar Taungnyut township, using excessive force and stun grenades to arrest railway staff who joined the civil disobedience movement.³ The raid was accompanied by terminations and prosecutions with arrest warrants targeting the CDM employees under Sections 188 and 505(a) of Myanmar’s Penal Code. The regime troops who were equipped with lethal weapons and deployed in many towns and villages also ransacked and brought violence within living neighborhoods, forcing youths, protesters, and CDM campaigners and participants to flee.

Blackout of Information Flow

While carrying out brutal crackdowns on omnipresent public protests, the military junta also disrupted mobile internet connection and WiFi services between 0100am and 0900am from 14 February to 15 March, then imposed a nationwide internet blackout from 15 March, 0100am to 28 April with an aim to interfere and cut the flow of information. Social media applications including Facebook and Twitter, thousands of information sites including Wikipedia, and IP addresses and URLs were blocked. The junta ordered people to remove PSI satellite dishes with threats of seizure and fine as well, in effect to prevent people from watching DVB and Mizzima channels on TV.

The junta-run Ministry of Information stated that it banned DVB, Myanmar Now, Mizzima, 7 Day and Khit Thit Media on 8 March, Tachileik News Agency on 20 April, Myitkyina News journal and the 74 Media on 29 April and Delta News Agency on 4 October.

115 newsmen and 26 newswomen, 141 journalists in total were arrested and nine newsmen and four newswomen, 13 journalists in total were sentenced to punitive penalties under criminal provisions between 1 February and 31 December. The violent acts of junta troops included not only arrests of journalists covering events on the ground but raids and destruction of their homes with excessive force and inhumane tortures during interrogation sessions.

Ko Soe Naing, a freelance photojournalist, who was arrested by the soldiers and police on 10 December when he had been covering the “Silent Strike” campaign in Yangon on the International

¹ ACLED. 2021. “*Deadly Demonstrations: Fatalities from State Engagement on the Rise*”. Available at <https://acleddata.com/2021/10/21/deadly-demonstrations/>

² 2021. “မြန်မာနိုင်ငံတွင် အာဏာသိမ်းပြီး ၆ လအတွင်း ငြိမ်းချမ်းစွာစုဝေးခြင်း အခြေအနေ”. Athan.

³ Aye Chan Thu (2021, March 10). “CDM လုပ်နေတဲ့ မလ္လာကုန်း မီးရထားဝန်ထမ်းတွေကို စစ်တပ်နဲ့ ရဲက ဝင်ရောက်ဖမ်းဆီးနေ”. Available at

<https://www.facebook.com/VoiceofMyanmarNews/posts/809840579617617>



Human Rights Day then lost his life a few days later⁴, is the first journalist killed by the junta during interrogation sessions. Ko Sai Win Aung, editor of the Federal Journal who had taken refuge in May Khi Wah village to continue broadcasting news, was also shot dead by the military in Lay Kay Kaw township, Karen state on December 25.⁵

Citizen Rights Crumbled by the Amendment of the “Privacy” Law

In addition to the frequent internet blackout, the junta issued an amendment of the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens (2017) (also known as the Privacy Law) which previously had imposed a moderate extent of protection on the freedoms of citizens, as a precursor of violent arrests of the protest leaders and CDM campaigners.

On 13 February, the junta chief addressed a statement that read “The stipulation of Sections 5, 7 and 8 of the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens shall be suspended in accordance with Article 420 of State Constitution,” citing the 2008 Constitution whose legitimacy can no longer be validated due to the 1 February coup d’état whereby the military made the constitution itself drafted for many years illegitimate.⁶

Some legal provisions of the law can be interpreted as follows: any responsible authorities require minimum of two accompanies who must comprise members of ward or village administrative body or officials if they enter a citizen’s home for the purpose of search, seizure or arrest pursuant to Section 5 of the Law Protecting the Privacy and Security of Citizens, no citizen shall be held in detention for more than 24 hours pursuant to Section 7; without an order, permission or warrant in accordance with existing laws, the authority shall not enter a citizen’s home for the purpose of search, seizure or arrest pursuant to Section 8(a), shall not make surveillance or espionage which can affect human dignity of a person on any citizen pursuant to Section 8(b), shall not eavesdrop or intercept any citizen’s communications through any communication devices pursuant to Section 8(c), shall not require demand personal information of any citizens from telecommunications operators pursuant to Section 8(d), shall not open, search, seize or eradicate any citizen’s private correspondence, envelope, package or parcel pursuant to Section 8(e), shall not unjustly interfere with any citizen’s private issues and family issues pursuant to Section 8(f), and shall not unjustly seize or destroy the property lawfully owned by any citizen pursuant to Section 8(g).

After the abolishment of the aforementioned legal provisions, the military blatantly acted arbitrary home invasions, arrests without warrant, private surveillance, eavesdropping on the communication devices, demanding the personal information of targeted individuals from telecommunications operators, opening and search of the packages and envelopes, abduction the spouse, family members or close relatives of politicians and activists as hostages, and seizures and seal-

⁴ Tin Aung Khine. December 14, 2021. ဓာတ်ပုံသတင်းထောက် ကိုစိုးနိုင် စစ်ကြောရေးမှူးမှာ သေဆုံး. *Radio Free Asia*. Available at <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/freelance-photojournalist-died-in-police-custody-12142021141522.html>

⁵ Maung Shwe Wah. December 26, 2021. လေးကေ့ကော်တွင် ခုံလှုံနေသူ ဂျာနယ်အယ်ဒီတာ လက်နက်ကြီးထိမှန် သေဆုံး. *Myanmar Now*. Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/topics/5277>

⁶ February 02, 2021. “စစ်အာဏာသိမ်းမှု ဖွဲ့စည်းပုံအခြေခံဥပဒေနှင့် ညီညွတ်ခြင်းမရှိဟု ဥပဒေပညာရှင်သုံးသပ်”. *Democratic Voice of Burma*. Available at <http://burmese.dvb.no/archives/438754>



off the citizens' property. The junta decreed the legal amendments with an aim to commit human rights violations and hinder the fundamental rights of people.

Amendment of Ward and Village Tract Administration Law and Reintroduction of Guest Registration

The military junta, on 13 February, amended the Ward and Village Tract Administration Law which was also known as “Guest-Registration Law” and had been amended by a bill revoking the overnight guest registration system from the law in the *Hluttaw* under the civilian government led by NLD in 2016, to reintroduce the system then took actions over the incompliance in some areas. In the aftermath of the resurrection, several townships in Yangon Region were forced to report the overnight guests to the local authorities.⁷ Furthermore, in Shan State’s Aungban township, Ma Ei Ei Nyein, the wife of Ko Bo Bo Han, a fugitive and former political prisoner was taken as a hostage following a raid which more than 40 security forces and policemen described as “overnight guest inspection” and seizure of his three computers, a Wi-Fi router and closed-circuit television cameras installed at the home.⁸ These incidents indicate that the military practiced arbitrary trespasses with the excessive force of troops to ensure that CDM supporters, campaigners, participants, and protesters who stayed hidden were easily arrested anytime.

Crackdowns on Protests in Prison

Political prisoners in the Insein Prison manifested their solidarity with the people staging different forms of protests against the military junta across the country by means of their strikes in the prisons. In spite of violent clampdowns on myriad protests, people still mounted anti-junta protests with guerilla-like tactics in major cities and rural areas, and the detainees in the Insein Prison held protests, on 23 July, shouting anti-junta chants and denouncing the prison authorities’ ignorance of the COVID-19 surge and severity among the prisoners, lack of health care for Prison Department staff and exclusion of political prisoners in the amnesty issued on 30 June. The prisoners also sang “Thway Thitsar” (*Faith of blood* or *Pledge in blood* in Burmese) and demanded three situations as follows: (1) unconditional release of political prisoners, (2) access to medics and health care system for the inmates, and (3) ease of draconian prison regulations. After the morning protest, the soldiers entered the prison and beat the protesters, throwing 21 prisoners including Ko Zaw Htet Naing alias Sitt Naing, a member of the central executive committee of All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) into solitary confinement, eventuating in at least eight critically injured victims and several others with other severe bruises according to independent media sources. As more regime troops were stationed at Obo Prison in Mandalay Region on 23 July for the purpose of preventing potential repercussion of Insein Prison’s protests, there reportedly prison rules were tightened, families found it more difficult to meet and provide essentials including food to their beloved ones in the prison and some inmates were transferred to remote prisons.

On International Human Rights Day observed on 10 December, political prisoners joined the nationwide silent strike movement again, which, however, saw the prison authorities reportedly beat 89 inmates from exclusive jail room (1) and (2) for partaking in the strike with the protest leaders reportedly

⁷ March 22, 2021. ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်အချို့တွင် ဧည့်စာရင်းတိုင်ရန် ဖိအားပေး. *Myanmar Now*. Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/6216>

⁸ Khin Khin Ei. April, 2021. ပြည်သူတွေ ဧည့်စာရင်းဥပဒေနဲ့ ဖိနှိပ်ခံရမှုပိုများလာ. *Radio Free Asia*. Available at <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/administration-law-04142021062022.html>



leg-cuffed and thrown into solitary confinement.⁹ Among the protesters, Ko Sitt Naing, the Vice-Chairman of Yangon University of Education Students Union, who had his head and back injured but was denied access to medical treatment and forced into solitary confinement instead, is reportedly now in critical condition. Similarly, Ko Wai Yan Phyo Moe, Vice-Chairman of All Burma Federation of Students Unions (ABSFU) and Ko Lay Pyay Soe Moe, Yangon University Students Union member and a responsible official for student’s rights, were heavily thrashed, leg-cuffed and held in isolation.¹⁰

The Junta’s Weaponization of COVID-19

Myanmar people are more frightened to live in fear from generation to generation under the military regime which is much more disastrous than COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, there is a bunch of evidence that the junta chief and his troops have used COVID-19 as a weapon to oppress the people with an aim to hold the illegitimate power, leaving the people at the mercy of deadly risks as the pandemic embodied the most devastating condition during the third wave in Myanmar between July and August.

As the consequences of the coup, common drug shortage in the market, skyrocketing medicine prices, a blanket ban on import of medicines and medical kits, forcible closure of hospitals, clinics, and community pharmacies, and banning oxygen factories from selling oxygen cylinders to civilians erupted. Families especially those living in the populous Yangon Region experienced lament for losing their beloveds at home while looking for oxygen hard in the community.

The military ordered a state-owned oxygen plant in Yangon’s Theinbyu Shipyard not to sell it to civilians, on 10 July, according to an anonymous plant official’s answer to Myanmar Now. On 12 July evening, the people queuing for the oxygen on Loikaw street in Yangon’s South Dagon Industrial Park fled and left the oxygen cylinders as junta troops fired bullets to break up the queue and arrest them.¹¹ A woman from Insein township was also prohibited by the troops at an oxygen plant on Min Dhamma Road on the night of 12 July.¹²

On 19 July again, the junta troops under the disguise of patients called and detained doctors healing COVID-19 patients in North Dagon Township, Yangon, and coerced them to get the location of their office. Then, the office was raided, ending with the arrest of two medical doctors providing online health guidelines for the North Dagon residents and three voluntary doctors working on the

⁹ December 13, 2021. အင်းစိန်ထောင် အသံတိတ်သပိတ် ဖြိုခွင်းခံရပြီး တိုက်ပိတ်ခံရကြောင်း ထောင်နဲ့နီးစပ်သူတွေပြော. *Radio Free Asia*. Available at <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/silent-strike-in-insein-prison-12132021071144.html>

¹⁰ December 17, 2021. အင်းစိန်ထောင်တွင်းသပိတ် ဖြိုခွင်းခံရမှု ဒဏ်ရာရသူတွေ ဆေးကုသခွင့်မရ. *Radio Free Asia*. Available at https://www.rfa.org/burmese/program_2/political-prisoners-protest-in-insein-prison-12172021051348.html

¹¹ July 19, 2021. ကိုဗစ်တတိယလှိုင်းထဲက အောက်ဆီဂျင်တိုက်ပွဲ. *Myanmar Now*. Available at <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/7501>

¹² July 19, 2021. ကိုဗစ်တတိယလှိုင်းထဲက အောက်ဆီဂျင်တိုက်ပွဲ. *Myanmar Now*. Available at <https://myanmar-now.org/mm/news/7501>



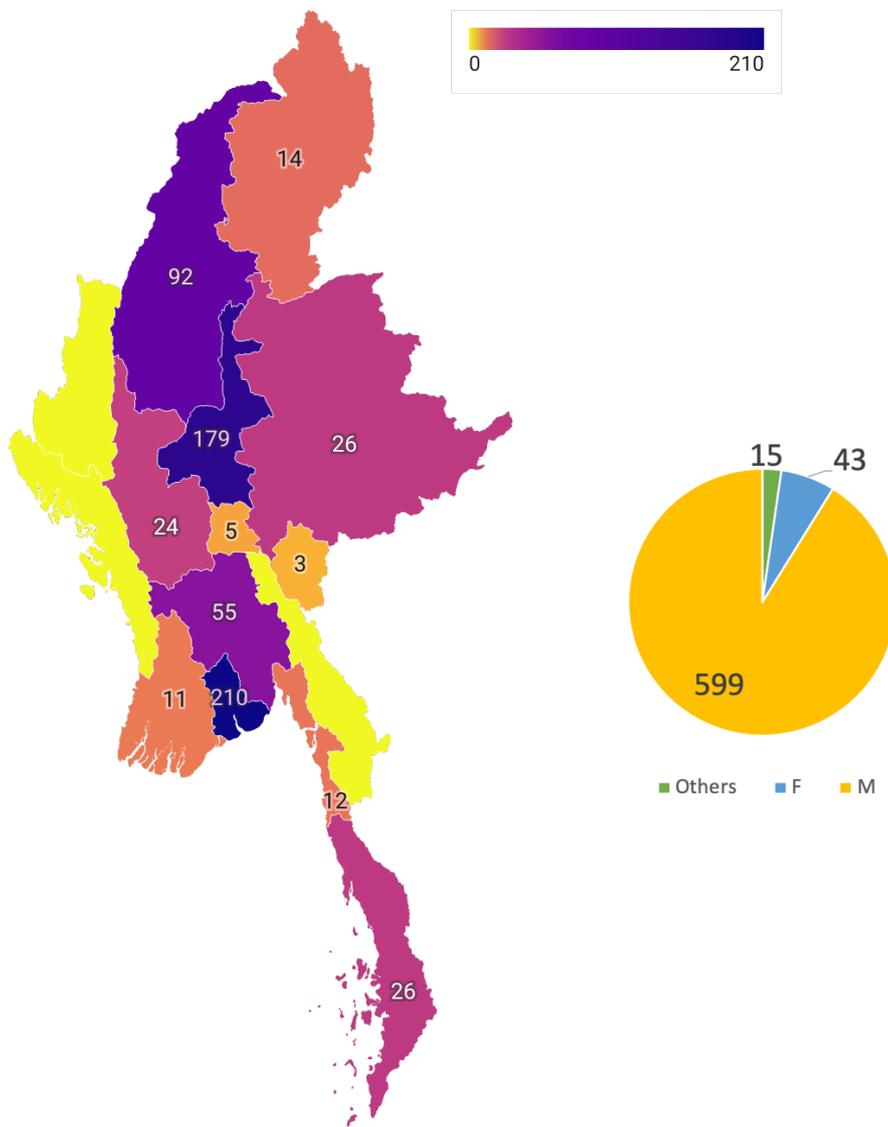
ground. The troops looted five 40-liter oxygen cylinders, 18 15-liter cylinders, 12 sets of oxygen equipment, personal protective equipment (PPEs), and medicines, claiming those were illegal.¹³

On 31 July, police used force twice in dispersing crowds of people waiting to buy Enoxaparin Injection at Shwe Oh pharmacy near Nandawun bizarre in South Okkalapa township.¹⁴

Moreover, the junta troops committed arrests of doctors, nurses, and medical experts with different alleged offenses, raids on their homes, and issuing arrest warrants.

List of Peaceful Protesters Killed by the Junta

List of people killed in the protests between 1 February and 31 December



¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ July 31, 2021. ရန်ကုန်တွင် ဆေးဝယ်ရန် တန်းစီနေသူများကို ရဲက လှူစွဲ။ Myanmar Now. Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/7648>



The military junta killed at least 657 people exercising their right to peaceful protest against it between 1 February and 31 December. The toll of people tortured to death in interrogation centres across the country within 11 months has raised to 103 according to figures published by Radio Free Asia (RFA).¹⁵

The More Brutal the Junta Is, The More Momentous the Revolution Gets

The military junta cannot expand its control into the entire country in the face of people’s protests, established armed resistance groups, and dissents even though Min Aung Hlaing led a coup d’état, seizing power with arms on 1 February. The junta’s security forces rammed a military truck into a peaceful protest in Panbingyi ward, Kyimyindaing township in Yangon on 5 December, with footages going viral on social media and sparked outrage amid people, leading them to pay more attention to the revolution. A youth was quoted by Myanmar Now as saying, “Protester marched from Panbingyi street into the road. A double-cab being driven at 80 mph or 90 mph advanced and rammed into the protest when they walked about 20 steps. People were hit and scattered to 20 or 30 feet away. All were hit and scattered. No one could stand up”.¹⁶

At least three people were severely injured with 10 arrested in that case which provoked strong indignation from the people again due to the military’s terrorist-style violence against peaceful protesters¹⁷ and pots-and-pans protests of expelling the dictator resumed in many places in Yangon on the same day.

On 31 July, 11 villagers from Khotwin, Thayettaw, and Nyaungthu village in Kani town, Sagaing Region were reportedly burnt alive with two motorbikes.¹⁸ Besides, the regime troops opened artillery fires about ten times on the Chin State’s Thantlang township and burned down 164 buildings including churches, banks, and the majority of homes after a soldier had been killed on 19 October.¹⁹ The township suffered a gigantic arson attack again on 24 November, resulting in the destruction of 50 homes and for the third time on 4 December, ending with 19 buildings including churches.²⁰ According to the local organizations, Thantlang township experienced arson attacks more than ten times since the middle of September and five churches and more than 490 homes were destroyed. Moreover, the junta troops staged an inhumane massacre of 11 day-wage hired workers, burning them alive with their hands tied behind their back in Don Taw village in Sagaing Region’s Salingyi town, home to 300 households,

¹⁵ January 7, 2022. အာဏာသိမ်းပြီး ၁၁ လအတွင်း စစ်ကြောရေးမှာ သေဆုံးသူ ၁၀၃ ဦးရှိ၊ *Radio Free Asia*.

Available at https://www.rfa.org/burmese/program_2/eleven-months-coup-103-people-killed-in-interrogations-01072022025624.html

¹⁶ December 6, 2021. စစ်ကောင်စီ၏ ရက်စက်ကြမ်းကြုတ်မှု သက်သေ၊ ပန်းပင်ကြီးလမ်းဖြစ်စဉ်၊ *Myanmar Now*.

Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/9560>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ August 18, 2021. “ကနီဒေသတိုက်အစုလိုက်အပြုံလိုက် သတ်ဖြတ်ခံရမှုများ”. Available at

<https://aappb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Burmese-Final-Edition-.pdf>

¹⁹ Nyein Swe and Lin Htin. October 30, 2021. စစ်တပ်ရှို့မီးကြောင့် ထန်တလန်မှ အိမ် ၁၆၀ ကျော် မီးလောင်ဟု CDF ပြော၊ *Myanmar Now*. Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/9037>

²⁰ Nyeing Swe and Lin Htin. November 25, 2021. ထန်တလန်တွင် နေအိမ် ၅၀ခန့် ထပ်မံမီးရှို့ခံရ၊ *Myanmar Now*.

Available at <https://www.myanmar-now.org/mm/news/9445>



in December.²¹ However, it is truly evident that such cruelty gives rise to people’s agony and outrage, ergo the revolution has gathered momentum till it has been for a rather long time.

The Military Led by Min Aung Hlaing Urgently Needs to Be Designated as Terrorist Organisation

Myanmar military that, prior to the coup, had already been notorious for many decades for its violence and mass human rights violations in ethnic minority areas since more than 70 years ago, have been acting arson attacks on houses of the entire village, burning innocent people alive to death, seizures and ransacks of people’s property, attacking civilians with helicopter gunships, tortures to death in interrogation centres in a monstrous, systematic and widespread manner since the coup. In a recent atrocity on 25 December, regime troops burned around 49 civilians detained alive to death in Hpruso township, Kayah State (Karenni State).²² The military’s airstrikes in the offensives against Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) near Lay Kay Kaw, Myawaddy township in Karen State also left more than 5,000 local residents fled and taking refuge in shelters in Thailand.²³ The atrocities in 2021 clearly indicate that the Myanmar military’s acts do not comply with the characteristics and ethics of an army in line with international standards but those of a terrorist organization. As Myanmar people refrained from calling Myanmar’s Armed Forces “the military” and started branding it “the terrorist organization” instead of after realizing its inhumanity since February, we recommend in this report that international organizations should designate the military as a “terrorist organization”. It is undeniable that inadequate actions of the United Nations and major powers are unintentional enforcement for the junta to commit more atrocities against humanity.

²¹ December 2021. ဆားလင်းကြီး ခိုးတောရှာမှာ လူ ဘ ဦး မီးရှို့သတ်ဖြတ်ခံရ. *Radio Free Asia*. Available at <https://www.rfa.org/burmese/news/myanmar-soldiers-setfire-killed-11-men-in-salingyi-12072021071737.html>

²² January 4, 2022. ဖရူဆိုတွင် အစုလိုက်အပြုံလိုက် မီးရှို့အသတ်ခံရမှု ၄၉ ခန့်ထိရှိလာနိုင်. *Irrawaddy*. Available at <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2022/01/04/248635.html>

²³ January 6, 2022. လေးကျောက်ဒေသကို စစ်ကောင်စီတပ်များ အင်အားဖြည့်တင်း ထပ်မံဝင်ရောက်လာ. *Democratic Voice of Burma*. Available at <http://burmese.dvb.no/archives/509932>

Note: Photos were retrieved from following addresses and the credit goes to the original posters:

- <https://mawkun.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/unnamed-5-1024x683.jpg>
- <https://startsomegood.com/the-civil-disobedience-movement-cdm-in-myanmar>
- <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2Fpurplewingsmm%2Fstatus%2F1357614305902952448&psig=AOvVaw2xWBWlx3sTI93ITnCo4fDp&ust=1642249933151000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CA5QjRxqFwoTCKiN8cifsUCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAJ>
- <https://m.koreatimes.co.kr/pages/article.asp?newsIdx=303736>
- <https://twitter.com/nnwyl/status/1358338700799660037>

