The constitutional reform movement gains steam and political support, but Daw Suu is warned by regime Election Commission over her comments at mass rallies.

Regime again ensures Rohingya issue is not discussed at the 24th ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw.

ASEAN interface meeting cancelled after Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore governments attempt to replace civil society delegates with own nominees.

Regime Election Commission proposes new election regulations, curtailing parties’ ability to campaign.

Religious conversion bill moves ahead, constitutional reform stalls.

Regime further hinders Rohingya access to healthcare in Arakan State by imposing more restrictions on aid operations.

Tatmadaw attacks and civilian abuses continue in Kachin and Shan States, undermining ceasefire talks.

Regime extends census data collection in Arakan State, denies any link between census activities and recent conflict in Kachin and Shan States.

Freedom House rates Burma’s press “Not Free”; foreign DVB reporter is deported.

US President Barack Obama renews economic sanctions banning US investment in Burma.

Tensions flare between Burma and Bangladesh after Burmese security personnel kill a Bangladeshi trooper and refuse to return his body.

**KEY STORY**

Constitutional reform movement gains political support, Daw Suu warned by regime Election Commission

On 22 May, the regime Election Commission sent warning letters to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political party leaders, quoting Daw Suu’s comments made during a rally in Mandalay on 18 May, where she challenged the military to amend the constitution and said “I want the army to prove that they wish to amend this constitution.” The regime Election Commission warned her to abide by the Political Parties Registration Law and the 2008 constitution, as required by all political parties and MPs.¹

¹ DVB (27 May 14) Suu Kyi rebuked for ‘challenge’ to military; Mizzima News (26 May 14) Election commission warns NLD leader over challenge to Tatmadaw; Irawaddy (26 May 14) Burma Election Commission Warns Suu Kyi Over ‘Challenging the Army’
In response to the regime Election Commission’s letter, Daw Suu told the People’s Assembly on 28 May that her comments made at the rally did not violate the law.6

Earlier in the month, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi spoke at jointly organized NLD and 88 Generation Peace and Open Society Group rallies calling for constitutional amendments ahead of the 2015 general elections. She challenged the military to show they “have no intention of holding to power” and amend the constitution, specifically Article 436, before the end of the year.7 Article 436 has consistently been criticized for blocking the possibility of democratic constitutional reform. In May, UN Special Rapporteur also criticized the military’s effective veto over changes to the constitution.8

On 18 and 19 May, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy secretary Sai Nyunt Lwin and All Mon Region Democracy Party Chairman Ngwe Thein announced that their parties had decided to join the NLD-88 Generation Peace and Open Society campaign for constitutional amendments.9

On 27 May, on the anniversary of the 1990 election that the NLD won by a landslide victory, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi addressed 3,000 supporters at the Naypyidaw NLD office to launch the NLD and 88 Generation Peace and Open Society two-month signature petition to amend the 2008 constitution.10

Constitutional reform proposal to go to Parliament

On 15 May, after five months of deliberation, the 31-member parliamentary committee tasked with reviewing the compilation of suggested amendments to the constitution met in Naypyidaw.11 On 19 May, the committee decided to propose to Parliament that Article 436 of the constitution relating to constitutional amendments be amended so that the required support for passing any constitutional amendment would only be two-thirds or 66% of the Parliament.12 The committee will submit the suggestions to the National Parliament for an official vote.13

INSIDE BURMA

Burma chairs the 24th ASEAN Summit

On 10-11 May, Burma hosted the 24th ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw.14 The regime maintained its strict gag on the Rohingya issue as it previously did at January’s ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting

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2 Irrawaddy (17 May 14) Suu Kyi Calls on Military to ‘Back Down’; Xinhua (17 May 14) Myanmar opposition party holds public campaign for constitution reform
4 DVB (28 May 14) Constitutional reform rally held in Irrawaddy division
5 DVB (29 May 14) Peace without constitutional reform is like ‘hopping on one leg’, says Min Ko Naing
6 Mizzima News (29 May 14) NLD leader responds to UEC warning: ‘I have never violated the law’
8 UNOHCHR (23 May 14) Constitutional Reform, a crucial step in the transition to a more democratic nation
9 Mizzima News (20 May 14) Ethnic minority groups join campaign for constitutional reform
10 RFA (27 May 14) Suu Kyi Urges Public to ‘Test Parliament’ With Charter Change Campaign
11 NLM (16 May 14) Amendment for constitution discussed
12 RFA (21 May 14) Myanmar Charter Committee Asks Parliament to Amend Key Clause; Xinhua (21 May 14) Myanmar’s special parliamentary committee suggests change in section-436; EMG (20 May 14) Charter committee discusses how to amend Section 436; NLM (18 May 14) NLD, 88 Generation call for amendment of Section 436 with launch of signature campaign
13 RFA (21 May 14) Myanmar Charter Committee Asks Parliament to Amend Key Clause; EMG (17 May 14) Charter change to first focus on Chapter 12: committee
14 Xinhua (11 May 14) ASEAN leaders’ meeting opens in Myanmar capital
[See January 2014 Burma Bulletin]. In apparent compliance, ASEAN Sec-Gen Le Luong Minh confirmed the subject “has not been brought up and will not be brought up”. President Thein Sein avoided all thorny topics in his opening speech, choosing to address regional climate change action.

Vietnam and the Philippines sought support of other ASEAN members in resolving a dispute with China over the South China Sea territorial claims. The issue overshadowed talks, leading ASEAN foreign ministers to call for a peaceful and diplomatic resolution the day before the summit.

Other key developments at the summit included:
- Regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin and Indonesian FM Marty Natalegawa signed a visa exemption agreement for ordinary passport holders, taking effect from May.
- ASEAN’s foreign ministers said they were monitoring Thailand’s political situation, and emphasized support for a peaceful and democratic resolution.
- ASEAN adopted the “Naypyidaw Declaration on Realization of ASEAN Community by 2015”.

**ASEAN interface meeting cancelled**

On 10 May, the Regional Steering Committee of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF) 2014 announced it was withdrawing from the interface meeting with ASEAN leaders in Naypyidaw which was scheduled for 11 May. The interface was designed to allow civil society to meet briefly with ASEAN heads of state. However, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore governments’ attempt to insert their own nominees to replace the civil society delegates they had rejected gave the ACSC/APF no choice but to withdraw. The ACSC/APF Steering Committee had previously told Naypyidaw it would accept governments’ rejection of some delegates as long as they were not replaced by government nominees.

Immediately afterwards, the regime Foreign Affairs Ministry announced that it was canceling the interface meeting, blaming the “untoward reaction” of civil society leaders and defending the right of member countries to choose their own civil society representatives, saying it was “ASEAN practice”.

Civil society leaders were “disappointed” by the cancellation of the interface. Steering Committee spokesperson Aung Myo Min said that despite withdrawing from the interface, the regional committee had agreed civil society leaders could still attend as national representatives.

**Tighter control on campaigning ahead of elections**

On 15 May, political party representatives met with regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye to discuss proposed new election regulations. According to the regulations:

- Parties would only be allowed to campaign for a one-month period before the elections.
- Parties would be required to submit in advance to the regime Election Commission the location, time, and attendance numbers of any campaign rally.

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15 AP (17 Jan 14) Myanmar denies Buddhist mob kills Muslim villagers; Myanmar Times (12 May 14) Govt succeeds in keeping Rohingya off ASEAN Summit agenda
16 WSJ (11 May 14) Myanmar Keeps Rohingya Muslims From Upstaging Summit
17 Xinhua (11 May 14) Myanmar urges ASEAN leaders to address climate change
18 AFP (12 May 14) ASEAN must tackle South China Sea claims, says Aquino
19 Xinhua (10 May 14) ASEAN FM’s express “serious concerns” over developments in South China Sea
20 Xinhua (11 May 14) Myanmar, Indonesia agree on visa exemption for ordinary passport holders
21 AFP (11 May 14) ASEAN urges peaceful resolution to Thai crisis
22 Xinhua (11 May 14) Regional cooperation, integration highlighted at ASEAN summit
23 Myanmar Times (12 May 14) ASEAN civil society meeting called off amid controversy; DVB (11 May 14) Civil society delegates boycott ASEAN meeting
24 DVB (11 May 14) Civil society delegates boycott ASEAN meeting
25 ACSC/APF 2015 Steering Committee (10 May 14) ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples’ Forum withdraws from interface with heads of government
26 Myanmar Times (12 May 14) ASEAN civil society meeting called off amid controversy
27 Myanmar Times (12 May 14) ASEAN civil society meeting called off amid controversy
28 Irrawaddy (15 May 14) Election Campaign Rules Spark Concern Among Opposition Parties
29 Irrawaddy (15 May 14) Election Campaign Rules Spark Concern Among Opposition Parties; RFA (15 May 14) Myanmar Opposition Concerned Over Proposed Campaign Rules
30 RFA (15 May 14) Myanmar Opposition Concerned Over Proposed Campaign Rules
• Party members must also register or gain approval from the local regime Election Commission branch prior to speaking to the public or to the media.\(^{31}\)

• Non-candidates or party leaders wishing to campaign on behalf of an official candidate must first register and gain approval from the local regime Election Commission branch.\(^{32}\)

This last regulation related to a statement made by regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye on 7 April, where he said that the regime Election Commission would only allow candidates to campaign in their own constituencies prior to the 2015 general elections, which could affect Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s ability to campaign across Burma on behalf of the NLD.\(^{33}\)

**Regime introduces Religious Conversion bill**

On 27 May, the regime pushed forward with its extremist anti-Muslim agenda, publishing the Religious Conversion bill draft in state-run media.\(^{34}\)

The bill is one of four proposed restrictive laws on interfaith marriage that make up the “National Race and Religion Protection” package, originally proposed by the extremist coalition Buddhist Organization for the Protection of National Race and Religion (OPNRR) in July 2013.\(^{35}\) [See February 2014 Burma Bulletin] Drafts of the other three bills – the Marriage Act, the Population Control Act and the Monogamy Act – are yet to be published.\(^{36}\)

The seven-chapter bill will establish township-level “registration” boards. Anyone wishing to convert to another religion must submit a detailed application giving a reason for conversion, and submit to an interview by four members of the registration board, who will make a decision in 90 days.\(^{37}\) Punishment for violations, such as conversion with intent to insult or damage any other religion, forced or coerced conversion and harassment meant to influence choice of faith, is arbitrarily left to the board. Anyone found guilty is subject to a maximum of two years’ imprisonment and a fine of 200,000 kyat (US$200).\(^{38}\)

The bill will be submitted to Parliament for discussion on 20 June.\(^{39}\) The bill is one of a chain of regime anti-Muslim initiatives that has caused widespread concern. On 30 April, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended that Burma be re-designated by the State Department as “countries of particular concern” whose governments engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom. In its “2014 Annual Report,” USCIRF said that political reforms had done little to curtail anti-Muslim violence, particularly targeting Rohingya. The report noted that the regime had taken inadequate steps to address the underlying causes of sectarian violence and hold individuals fully accountable.\(^{40}\)

On 28 May, Parliament convened for its tenth regular session in Naypyidaw.\(^{41}\)
Aid operations in Arakan State resume under severe restrictions

In May, the regime informed international aid agencies in Arakan State that humanitarian activities could only be carried out with advance permission and supervision of the Rakhine-led Arakan State Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC), severely limiting Rohingya access to healthcare.\[^{42}\]

According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), before the regime suspended all humanitarian activity in Arakan, aid agency medics were conducting 18,000 consultations a month in the camps; in April this dropped to 6,000.\[^{43}\] Only 16 UN agencies and 10 aid organizations resumed activities in Arakan State after the regime lifted the suspension.\[^{44}\]

- **2 May**: UN and NGO representatives met with local officials from the Arakan State Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC). At the meeting, the ECC told aid organizations that they would need to apply for at least a week’s advance permission from the ECC for any of their movements or operations in Arakan State, effectively blocking any emergency aid services.\[^{45}\]

- **8 May**: The regime Health Ministry, the ECC, UN agencies, and partner NGOs met in Akyab [Sittwe], Arakan State, to discuss restoration of humanitarian services to Arakan State. The ECC opposed the construction of an emergency hospital for displaced Rohingya in Dar Paing camp near Akyab as it would imply that they have a ‘permanent’ status in Burma.\[^{46}\]

- **25 May**: Twenty Rakhine civil society organizations from all 17 townships of Arakan State met in Akyab and announced that they would be setting up a “UN, INGO Watch Team” to monitor and “investigate” the operations of international aid organizations working to help the Rohingya community, and inform the aid organizations if they do not approve of their activities.\[^{47}\]

On 20 May, UNOCHA reported that over 23,000 people in Arakan State lacked access to safe water and needed daily help from aid agencies in April. UNOCHA revealed that the aid suspension followed by new restrictions had led to an increase in deaths from treatable diseases such as diarrhea and warned that the lack of vaccines and adequate latrine facilities were heightening disease risks in Arakan State.\[^{48}\]

Tatmadaw clashes continue in Kachin and Shan States

Throughout May and despite the regime peacemaking team’s ongoing meetings with ethnic armed groups including the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Tatmadaw troops continued to attack the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in Kachin and Northern Shan States.\[^{49}\]

- **4 May**: Tatmadaw troops stationed at Mai Hpang post near Monkoe Village, Muse Township, Northern Shan State, fired 32 mortar rounds into the nearby mountain range, targeting KIA forces.\[^{50}\]

- **5 May**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA Battalion 27 forces in Pung Ling Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State.\[^{51}\]

- **8 May**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces at Kyauk Hpyar Village, Namkham Township, Shan State.\[^{52}\]

- **10 May**: Tatmadaw troops from LIBs 507 and 568 clashed with KIA Battalion 38, TNLA Battalion 818, and MNDAA Battalion 17 forces between Mongko and Paung Hsing Villages, Muse Township, Northern Shan State.\[^{53}\]

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\[^{42}\] DVB (02 May 14) Aid workers negotiate terms in Arakan
\[^{43}\] UNOCHA (20 May 14) Humanitarian Bulletin Myanmar, Issue 4
\[^{45}\] DVB (02 May 14) Aid workers negotiate terms in Arakan
\[^{46}\] DVB (14 May 14) Additional aid to Rohingya camps may imply ‘permanent status’: ECC member; Irrawaddy (26 May 14) Arakanese Groups to ‘Monitor’ Aid Operations for Rohingya
\[^{47}\] Irrawaddy (26 May 14) Arakanese Groups to ‘Monitor’ Aid Operations for Rohingya
\[^{48}\] UNOCHA (20 May 14) Humanitarian Bulletin Myanmar, Issue 4
\[^{49}\] Kachin News Group (06 May 14) Tensions remain high after army harasses and detains Kachin refugees; Kachinland News (05 May 14) Fierce Battles Continue in Kachin and Northern Shan State; Kachinland News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
\[^{50}\] Kachinland News (05 May 14) Fierce Battles Continue in Kachin and Northern Shan State
\[^{51}\] Kachinland News (05 May 14) Fierce Battles Continue in Kachin and Northern Shan State
\[^{52}\] Kachin News Group (09 May 14) Burma army and KIA fight whole day in southern Kachin state
• 12 May: Tatmadaw troops from LID 77 clashed with TNLA Battalion 256 forces between Munpat and Hsam-ngam Villages, Namhsan Township, Shan State.54
• 13 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 217 clashed with KIA Battalion 2 forces at Man Htun Village, Kutkai Township.
• 13 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 112 clashed with KIA forces near Loilem, Loilem Township, Northern Shan State.55
• 13 May: Tatmadaw troops from LID 88 clashed with TNLA Battalion 478 forces at Htet-kyet Village, Namkham Township, Shan State.56
• 14 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 301 clashed with KIA Battalions 12 and 27 at Nam Sa Village and Sharaw La Hkyet Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State.57
• 14 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 290 clashed with TNLA Battalion 335 and MNDAA Battalion 3 forces at Ta Mon Ye Village in Kutkai Township, Shan State.58
• 15 May: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA Battalion 17 troops near Hu Bu Manau Bum hill in northeastern Shan State.59
• 15 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 45 clashed with TNLA Battalion 223 and MNDAA forces near Nam Jarap Village, Hsenwi Township, Shan State.60

Tatmadaw commit fresh civilian abuse in Kachin and Shan States

In May, the Tatmadaw continued to commit human rights violations against civilians in Kachin and Shan States:

• 3 May: Tatmadaw troops from LID 88 detained 14 Kachin IDPs who they suspected of having links to the KIA, living in Lagat Yang IDP Camp, Man Wein Village, Mansi Township, Kachin State.61 They were later released on 4 and 5 May.62
• 4 May: Four hundred IDPs from six villages who were fleeing from a Tatmadaw offensive in Mongpan Township, Northern Shan State, arrived in Muse Township, Northern Shan State. The IDPs reported being robbed and threatened by Tatmadaw soldiers.63
• 13 May: Tatmadaw troops raided Man Ong, Man Kong, and Pha Dan Villages in Namkham Township, Shan State. They also detained and later released a Ta’aug [Palaung] farmer in the same area.64
• 15 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 415 ransacked and robbed villager’s homes and beat a mentally-disabled person in Mauk Sam Village, Hsihsang Township, Northern Shan State.65
• 16 May: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 568 raped a 15-year-old Kachin girl in Nam Gut Village, Kutkai Township, Shan State.66

On 16 May, UNOCHA released a statement expressing concern over the displacement and deteriorating security situation of over 3,000 people in Southern Kachin and Northern Shan States since fighting intensified on 10 April. The statement noted that “security incidents” had made access to IDPs “increasingly difficult” and raised concerns for protection of civilians trapped by the war in Kachin and Northern Shan States.67

53 Kachinland News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble; Kachin News Group (19 May 14) UN warns of worsening refugee conditions in Kachin and Shan states
54 Kachin News Group (19 May 14) UN warns of worsening refugee conditions in Kachin and Shan states
55 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
56 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
57 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
58 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
59 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
60 Kachin News (15 May 14) Battles Rage in Kachin and Shan State as Peace Talks Stumble
61 Kachin News Group (06 May 14) Tensions remain high after army harasses and detains Kachin refugees; Irrawaddy (05 May 14) Burma Army Detains 14 Kachin IDPs, NGO Says; Mizzima News (05 May 14) Tatmadaw arrests 14 at Kachin refugee camp; Kachinland News (06 May 14) IDPs Flee Fighting in Mungpaw, Some Confined to Their Camp
62 Irrawaddy (05 May 14) Burma Army Detains 14 Kachin IDPs, NGO Says
63 Kachin News (06 May 14) IDPs Flee Fighting in Mungpaw, Some Confined to Their Camp
64 Irrawaddy (14 May 14) Burma Army Detains Palaung Man Accused of TNLA Links: Activists
65 Kachin News (19 May 14) Burmese Government Soldiers Raped 15-year-old Girl and Ransacked Civilian Homes
67 UNOCHA (16 May 14) Humanitarian situation deteriorates in Myanmar’s southern Kachin state and northern Shan state
Tatmadaw attacks on ethnic groups undermines ceasefire talks

Ethnic armed groups continued to question the Tatmadaw’s commitment to the peace talks in light of several incidents that occurred in May:

- **5-9 May:** Tatmadaw troops from IB 245 arrested a Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) member without a warrant, starved and tortured him for four days, and charged him under the Unlawful Association Act for allegedly colluding with the Shan State Army-South. The SNLD warned the regime that such incidents would negatively affect the ceasefire and peace process. The SNLD member was then released on 29 May with all charges dropped.

- **5 May:** A Karen National Union (KNU) delegation led by KNU vice-chair Zipporah Sein met with the regime peacemaking team in Rangoon, and warned that continued clashes between the Tatmadaw and the KIA would hamper efforts to achieve a nationwide ceasefire accord.

- **6 May:** Twenty Tatmadaw soldiers and police raided the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) liaison office in Kengtung Township, Shan State. On 8 May, RCSS/SSA-S chairman Lt Gen Yawd Serk sent a letter to the regime demanding an explanation for the raid. On 21 May, the RCSS released a statement saying the raid “badly affected the mutual trust that has so far been achieved between the two sides” and warned that the RCSS would “continue the armed struggle” if necessary.

On 21-23 May, the regime and ethnic armed groups’ peacemaking teams met in Rangoon, and completed a second ceasefire draft, postponing the finalization of the agreement until their next meeting. On the first day of the talks, 79 civil society organizations (CSOs) issued a statement condemning the Tatmadaw’s recent offensives Kachin and Shan States and accused the Tatmadaw of using peace talks to divert attention from their continued aggression on the ethnic groups. The CSOs warned that peace talks would be fruitless unless clashes stopped.

Regime President’s Office Minister Aung Min in his capacity as vice-chair of the regime’s peacemaking team attended meetings with other ethnic political and armed groups outside of the ethnic arms groups’ peacemaking team. In each instance, he only promised political dialogue after the groups agreed to the ceasefire.

Census data collection extended

The regime continued its ethnic exclusion agenda by refusing Rohingya the ability to self identify during the extended census data collection this month. On 7 May, at a press conference in Rangoon, regime Immigration and Population Minister Khin Yi informed that census data collection would continue in Arakan State till the end of May to include the Muslim population left out in the earlier 30 March-10 April data collection, by introducing a “don’t tell” policy for anyone wanting to identify as Rohingya. Khin Yi said the term Rohingya was still not accepted, but if people had problems listing themselves as ‘Bengali’ in the census, then they should not say anything. Khin Yi also said conflict escalation between Kachin and Northern Shan States was not connected to the census, and denied that security forces were present during data collection in conflict zones.

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**Footnotes:**

68 DVB (08 May 14) Shan leader abducted by Army in Kengtung; SHAN (09 May 14) Police accuse SNLD member of violating Unlawful Association Act; Irrawaddy (09 May 14) Shan Man Allegedly Beaten by Soldiers for Links to RCSS

69 Irrawaddy (16 May 14) Arrest of Party Member Could Affect Peace Process, SNLD Says; DVB (19 May 14) Shan party says govt charges ‘false’

70 DVB (30 May 14) Charges dropped against detained Shan politician

71 Irrawaddy (07 May 14) Kachin Fighting Worrisome, KNU Tells Govt

72 SHAN (09 May 14) RCSS asks Naypyidaw to clarify raid on liaison office

73 Irrawaddy (23 May 14) Shan Rebel Group Vows to ‘Continue Armed Struggle’ If Necessary

74 DVB (21 May 14) Ceasefire talks underway in Rangoon; RFA (23 May 14) Myanmar Government, Ethnic Armies Agree on Second Cease-Fire Draft; Xinhua (23 May 14) Myanmar gov’t, armed groups pan out second draft of peace agreement

75 DVB (24 May 14) NCCT, govt agree ‘second draft’ at peace talks

76 EMG (14 May 14) Political dialogue to be discussed after ceasefire; Aung Min

77 DVB (08 May 14) Census will try to count Arakan Muslims; Irrawaddy (07 May 14) Renewed Fighting Not Linked to Census-Taking: Burmese Minister

78 DVB (08 May 14) Census will try to count Arakan Muslims; Irrawaddy (07 May 14) Renewed Fighting Not Linked to Census-Taking: Burmese Minister

79 EMG (09 May 14) No plan to change ban on “Rohingya” in census, says Minister

80 Irrawaddy (07 May 14) Renewed Fighting Not Linked to Census-Taking: Burmese Minister
In a report “Counting the costs: Myanmar’s problematic census” released on 15 May, International Crisis Group (ICG) warned that the “inevitably controversial” census results could aggravate ethnic tensions, and held UNFPA responsible for the failures of the census process. On 22 May, UNFPA issued a press release conspicuously avoiding any comment on the ethnic conflict or controversy related to the data collection process. The press release tied in with a UNFPA event held on 21 May to highlight the importance of the census and introduce the media to the census data processing. UNFPA’s Chief Technical Advisor for the census Fredrick Okwayo said that the aggregate data could be used to influence the upcoming elections.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Burma’s press “Not Free”

In May, Burma’s press freedom continued to deteriorate.

• 1 May: Freedom House released its annual “Freedom of the Press” report, which rated Burma’s press as “Not Free”. The report listed Burma as one of the more repressive countries in Asia, saying that the pace of reform in Burma had slowed. It also found that the drafting of new media laws with limited input from the local media and the restrictions on coverage of ethnic violence remained issues of concern.

• 7 May: Immigration officials in Magwe, Magwe Division, summoned and interrogated foreign DVB intern reporter Angus Watson for “breaching the terms” of his visa after he reported on a demonstration in support of DVB video journalist Zaw Pe who was imprisoned on 7 April. On 8 May, immigration authorities deported Watson for breaching the terms of his visa, claiming he had taken part in the protest.

Activists arrested, charged, and sentenced for protesting

• 5 May: Police in Rangoon arrested activist Ko Htin Kyaw from the Movement for Democracy Current Force under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code for distributing pamphlets against the regime. After a court hearing at Rangoon’s South Okkalapa Township court on the same day, police took Ko Htin Kyaw to Insein Prison.

• 6 May: Thegon Township Court, Pegu Division, charged five farmers – Thant Zin Htet, Pauk Sa, Daw Nyo, Daw Mone, and Kyaw Thu from Thegon Township, Pegu Division, – under Article 505(b) of the Criminal Code in connection with a land ownership dispute. After the hearing, outside Paungde Prison, Pegu Division, police clashed violently with eight farmers supporting activist Pauk Sa who had been denied bail during the case. Two women were hospitalized after police struck them.

• 9 May: Authorities in Dedaye Township, Irrawaddy Division, arrested Bassein-based Human Rights Watch and Defense Network activist Tun Tun Oo for protesting against Article 18 of the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law.

• 21 May: A court in Yamethin Township, Mandalay Division, sentenced ten workers from the Moehti Moemi gold mine to one and a half years in prison under Articles 505(b), 188, and 143 of the Criminal Code in connection with a peaceful protest against the privatization of the mine.

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81 Mizzima News (16 May 14) Think tank issues fresh warning on census; Irrawaddy (16 May 14) Group Urges ‘Sensitivity’ in Release of Burma’s Census Data
82 UNFPA (22 May 14) Building confidence of Myanmar Census as data processing stage commences
83 Irrawaddy (22 May 14) Burma Census Data May Be Used Politically; Official
84 Freedom House (01 May 14) Freedom of the Press 2014: Media Freedom Hits Decade Low
85 Freedom House (01 May 14) Freedom of the Press 2014: Media Freedom Hits Decade Low
86 DVB (08 May 14) DVB reporter expelled from Burma
87 Irrawaddy (08 May 14) Australian Reporter Deported From Burma; AP (08 May 14) Myanmar deports Australian journalist
88 EMG (06 May 14) MDCF activist detained for anti-government protest
89 DVB (07 May 14) Farmers charged with defamation after invoking curse on govt; Mizzima News (07 May 14) Police, farmers clash after man denied bail over land protest dispute
90 Irrawaddy (07 May 14) Farmers Injured in Clash With Police After Court Decision; Mizzima News (07 May 14) Police, farmers clash after man denied bail over land protest dispute
91 Irrawaddy (15 May 14) Another Activist Faces Section 18 Charges
92 DVB (26 May 14) Mandalay miners sentenced to jail
DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya face arrest abroad

Throughout May, Rohingya migrants and refugees continued to face difficulties in their efforts to find work and shelter in neighboring nations.

- **9 May**: It was reported that in early May, nine Rohingya women and children had escaped from a family shelter north of Phuket, Thailand.93
- **9 May**: Malaysia’s Anti-Smuggling Unit detained 101 undocumented, Rohingya, migrant workers from Burma at Kurung Tengar beach, Kuala Perlis, Malaysia.94
- **18 May**: Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 24 Rohingyas crossing the Naff River into Bangladesh via row boat and pushed them back to Burma.95
- **20 May**: It was reported that UNHCR Chief in Dhaka Stina Lgungdell said the repatriation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh would not be possible until inter-communal violence in Arakan State had been resolved.96
- **20 May**: It was reported that the BGB had arrested over 1,173 Rohingyas along the Burma-Bangladesh border in 2014.97

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US renews sanctions against Burma

In mid-May, the US renewed the existing National Emergencies Act for another year,98 prohibiting new US investment in Burma or business with individuals in Burma involved in repression of the democracy movement.99 President Barack Obama informed Congress of the sanctions extension in a letter on 15 May, citing concerns for ongoing conflict and human rights abuses, particularly in Arakan State, and the military’s continued role in political and economic activities.100

Obama’s letter also said that Burma continued to pose an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States”, referring to the regime’s military links with North Korea.101

Burma-Bangladesh border clashes

Tensions between Burma and Bangladesh escalated in the month of May: four regime policemen were killed by suspected insurgents, leading to retaliatory attacks and the killing of a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) soldier.102

- **17 May**: Four regime border guard police officers were killed and one wounded after a clash with unidentified insurgents along the Burma-Bangladesh border in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.103
- **21 May**: Burma and Bangladesh border guard commanders met in Bandarban District, Bangladesh, to discuss border security issues. The regime border guard raised the 17 May incident, alleging that the

93 Phuketwan (09 May 14) Boatpeople Escape Shelter North of Phuket: Trafficking in Thailand Continues
94 Bernama (09 May 14) Kuala Perlis UPP Detain 101 Myanmar Illegal Immigrants
95 Kaladan News (20 May 14) Over 1173 Rohingyas arrested along the Burma-Bangladesh border
96 The Daily Star (19 May 14) Root causes of Rohingya crisis lie in Myanmar; Kaladan News (20 May 14) Over 1173 Rohingyas arrested along the Burma-Bangladesh border
97 Kaladan News (20 May 14) Over 1173 Rohingyas arrested along the Burma-Bangladesh border
98 Reuters (16 May 14) Obama Extends Some Sanctions Against Burma Despite Reforms; AFP (16 May 2014) US renews sanctions against Myanmar
99 Reuters (16 May 14) Obama Extends Some Sanctions Against Burma Despite Reforms
100 Reuters (16 May 14) Obama Extends Some Sanctions Against Burma Despite Reforms
101 Reuters (16 May 14) Obama Extends Some Sanctions Against Burma Despite Reforms
102 AFP (30 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar border clash over missing soldier; DVB (31 May 14) Tensions flare at Burma-Bangladesh border; Myanmar Times (30 May 14) Bangladesh demands return of missing soldier; DVB (31 May 14) Tensions flare at Burma-Bangladesh border; Myanmar-Bangladesh border fight; Irawaddy (30 May 14) Member of Bangladeshi Border Guard Killed by Burmese Police; PTI (31 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar Exchange Fire in Fresh Border Tension; bdnews24.com (31 May 14) My anmar returns dead BGB trooper; PTI (30 May 14) Tension along B'desh-Myanmar border after soldier shot dead
103 Irawaddy (19 May 14) Four Police Killed in Attack on Burma-Bangladesh Border; EMG (19 May 14) RSO’s insurgents ambushed police at Myanmar-Bangladesh border; Bangkok Post (18 May 14) Border raid kills 4 Myanmar police
attackers had entered Burma through Bangladesh. The BGB denied sheltering any insurgents and said if there were any attacks, the BGB would cooperate in joint operations against insurgency.104

- **28 May**: Regime border guard police opened fire on two BGB personnel patrolling by a Rohingya refugee camp at Naikhangchhari, Bandarban District, Bangladesh. The regime reported the death of an alleged insurgent of the ‘Rohingya Solidarity Organization’.106

- **29 May**: After the BGB received no information from regime border guard about their missing trooper, Bangladesh Foreign Ministry summoned Burma’s ambassador to Dhaka Myo Myint Than for an explanation and sent the regime Foreign Ministry a diplomatic note. The regime border guard then admitted they had a body.107

- **30 May**: The regime border guard invited the BGB to a meeting at border post 52 to identify the dead body and then opened fire on the BGB team as they approached.108

- **31 May**: Bangladesh Foreign Ministry again summoned Ambassador Myo Myint Than to protest the “unprovoked attack”, and handed a second diplomatic note.109

- **31 May**: Police Col Tun Oo from Akyab, Arakan State, confirmed that regime security forces had killed a BGB member.110 Regime Foreign Ministry issued a press release denying accusations in the Bangladesh government’s two diplomatic notes.111

- **31 May**: The two border forces met and regime border guard returned the body without the soldier’s weapons.112

### OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MAY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Speaking at the International Peace Institute in New York, UN Sec-Gen’s Special Advisor on Burma Vijay Nambiar says citizenship is essential for the security of Rohingya in Arakan State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Regime Central Statistical Organization report reveals that Burma suffered a trade deficit of US$2.56 billion in the 2013-14 fiscal year.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Regime Commerce Ministry data shows Burma’s international trade in fiscal year 2013-2014 amounted to US$24.86 billion, with China, followed by Thailand, being the biggest trading partners.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Unidentified armed men kill 3 and injure 9 people including Muslim Rohingya, in a shooting in Thinbawgyawt village, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Regime Environmental Conservation and Forestry Ministry reports that forestry officials seized over 1,000 tons of wood in a week of raids across Burma, and made 101 arrests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Speaking to regime Border Guard Forces in Naypyidaw, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing says “all armed forces [should be] under the command of the Defense Services” as stated in the 2008 constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development company announces the start of Thilawa SEZ land lease process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urges a KNU delegation to focus its efforts on amending the 2008 constitution and enforcing the rule of law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall urges the regime to allow “unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need”, improve conditions in IDP camps, and house displaced communities during a visit to Burma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Burma and India sign an MoU in Naypyidaw to work together to tackle insurgency, smuggling and human trafficking in border areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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104 EMG (24 May 14) Myanmar military to prevent cross-border insurgency; Kaladan News (24 May 14) High Level flag meeting for border security held at Bangladesh-Burma border
105 bdnews24.com (31 May 14) Myanmar returns dead BGB trooper; PTI (31 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar Exchange Fire in Fresh Border Tension
106 DVB (31 May 14) Tensions flare at Burma-Bangladesh border; Irrawaddy (30 May 14) Member of Bangladeshi Border Guard Killed by Burmese Police; Myanmar Times (30 May 14) Bangladesh demands return of missing border guard after clash
107 bdnews24.com (31 May 14) Myanmar returns dead BGB trooper; Xinhua (30 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar forces trade fire as tensions rise along border
108 Kaladan News (31 May 14) Red alert imposed at zero point of Bangladesh-Burma border; DVB (31 May 14) Tensions flare at Burma-Bangladesh border; EMG (31 May 14) Myanmar-Bangladesh border fight; PTI (31 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar Exchange Fire in Fresh Border Tension; bdnews24.com (31 May 14) Myanmar returns dead BGB trooper
109 PTI (31 May 14) Bangladesh, Myanmar Exchange Fire in Fresh Border Tension; Kaladan News (31 May 14) Red alert imposed at zero point of Bangladesh-Burma border
110 Irrawaddy (30 May 14) Member of Bangladeshi Border Guard Killed by Burmese Police; bdnews24.com (31 May 14) Myanmar returns dead BGB trooper
111 NLM (01 Jun 14) Myanmar will not tolerate any violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity; Xinhua (01 Jun 14) Myanmar rejects Bangladesh claim on border incidents
112 bdnews24.com (31 May 14) Myanmar returns dead BGB trooper; The Daily Star (31 May 2014) Myanmar hands over BGB man’s body
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<tr>
<th>12</th>
<th>Regime authorities force 300 local residents to relocate from the proposed area for the Thilawa SEZ outside Rangoon.</th>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>EU FMs in Brussels introduce 21 benchmarks for Burma, including adoption of international human rights treaties, political prisoners’ release, ban of death penalty, and ending communal violence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>About 180 workers from Star Tax garment factory in Rangoon’s Shwepyithar Industrial Zone protest against the mismanagement of the factory and the ill treatment of workers for the sixth day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Karen Human Rights Group releases a report titled “Truce or Transition” documenting ongoing Tatmadaw human rights abuses against Karen civilians related to increased militarization since the signing of a ceasefire between the Tatmadaw and the KNU in 2012.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>More than 150 civil society organizations send a letter to President Thein Sein voicing opposition to the draft National Race and Religion Protection Bills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Some 60 Arakan political and civil society figures in Rangoon celebrate the newly designated Arakan National Day.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>EU ratifies an extension of military sanctions on Burma for another year.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Marchers who set out from Rangoon on 14 March to call for the permanent cancellation of the Myitsone dam project reach their destination in Myitsone, Kachin State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Three Japanese companies developing the Thilawa SEZ begin the sale of leasehold rights for Class A Area, located southeast of Rangoon.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>The 1st EU-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue takes place in Naypyidaw, where attendees discuss political prisoners, freedom of expression, human rights, and the situation in Arakan State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Three Millennium Development Goal Fund commits US$91 million to help Burma deal with HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria until the end of 2016.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>More than 600 local Wanbao company workers in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, protest in front of the company’s offices demanding the company’s monthly wage be doubled to 230,000 kyat (US$240).</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>About 3,000 people from 35 civil society organizations hold a rally in Rangoon’s Thaketa and Dawpon Townships demanding constitutional amendments reducing the military’s role in politics.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>More than 200 farmers plow land in Sokkyaku Village, Pruso Township, Karenni State, to protest against 1,200 acres of farmland confiscated by the military in about 2004.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>AAPP and Former Political Prisoners Society release a statement saying that 59 political prisoners remain in jail, while 85 defendants are currently facing trial for political reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Farmers in the Hukawng Valley, Tanai Township, Kachin State, hold a press briefing to denounce the confiscation of over 300,000 acres of their land by the regime-affiliated Yuzana company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>HRW releases a statement calling on the regime to scrap the proposed religious conversion law and that it would encourage further repression and violence against Muslims and other religious minorities.</td>
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**REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN MAY**


