

## MYANMAR *weekly* UPDATE

7-13 January 2021

### // IN FOCUS

## A Tender Gourd Among the Cacti

*The Chinese Foreign Minister's visit serves as a reminder of Myanmar's commitment to an independent foreign policy, and of China's ability to shape events. p.2*

### // INSIDE

The KNU Request for Maintaining Peace **p.5**

Entrenched Practices Risk Women's Justice **p.5**

Consultations Waived in Coastal Camp Closure **p.6**

Government's Rakhine Enterprise Builds Rohingya Shelters **p.7**

Rohingya Smuggling: Increased Use of Overland Routes **p.8**

High Risks and Costs, but Smuggling Demand Strong **p.10**

Electoral Lawsuits Suggest Accountability Pathway p. **10**

## IN FOCUS

Following a year of strained bilateral ties, the Chinese Foreign Minister Mr Wang Yi visited Myanmar on 11-12 January. Reflecting real life priorities, Myanmar was the first stop on the minister's tour of southeast Asia. During his visit, Mr Wang Yi **voiced support** for Myanmar's peace talks with ethnic armed groups, and called for faster progress on major Chinese-led investment projects under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

Mr Wang Yi first met Myanmar President U Win Myint, before meeting State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The two parties discussed enhancing bilateral ties, a Chinese donation of 300,000 COVID-19 vaccinations, national reconciliation and infrastructure development in Myanmar. Mr Wang Yi also met with the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who (much to the chagrin of the civilian government) **reportedly** informed Mr Wang Yi about irregularities in the 2020 election and voter lists errors. The two also discussed China's trilateral talks initiative to facilitate the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh.

**Aligned to none**

Myanmar has sought to retain an independent foreign policy since independence. This has not always been an easy task. As a small state precariously placed between regional superpowers, Myanmar's first Prime Minister U Nu **remarked** that his country was 'hemmed in like a tender gourd among the cacti'.

Myanmar's difficulties in maintaining an independent foreign policy are best reflected in its internal armed conflicts and the peace process. Although China has taken a backseat role in the peace process in 2020, its influence over armed actors along its borderlands constitutes a large part of its carrot and stick approach to Myanmar.

Illustrating the distance China has retreated from the peace process over 2020, it did nothing when the seven-member Federal Political Negotiation and Consultation Committee bloc of armed groups **decided to boycott** the Myanmar government's August 2020 peace conference. This was in contrast to 2017, when ethnic armed groups' leaders threatened a boycott, and China **forced them onto an aeroplane** and flew them directly to the conference.

China's reluctance to get behind the peace process in 2020 has been born out of Myanmar's recent efforts to diversify its international relationships amid concern about over-dependence on its giant neighbour. As discussed here in a **previous CASS Weekly Update**, Myanmar has **indirectly accused** China of arming terrorist groups on Myanmar soil, and delayed major China-led infrastructure projects. All of this has strained bilateral ties.

The Foreign Minister's visit this week has thereby raised questions about whether China will promote peace in western Myanmar. There, clashes have stopped as the Arakan Army and Tatmadaw engage in a dialogue from which the civilian government is conspicuously absent.

China clearly has influence over the conflict, but this is not absolute. During Chinese President Xi Jinping's January 2020 visit to Myanmar, clashes between the Arakan Army and Tatmadaw suddenly ceased for the first time in months, only to resume when Xi Jinping left the country.

Conversely, in August 2019 the Arakan Army and its allies in the Brotherhood Alliance launched attacks on the Mandalay-Muse highway, severely disrupting Myanmar-China trade. The ability of China's Foreign Minister to influence the civilian government to join the dialogue may be restrained by a current impasse between Myanmar and China.

### The need for steel

An key objective of Mr Wang Yi's trip is to ensure the newly-elected government remains on board with Chinese investment projects in Myanmar. According to Chinese state-run [CGTN media](#), China aims to speed up the construction of three major projects -- the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone, the New Yangon City development, and the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone.

The two countries [signed a feasibility study](#) into the second phase of the proposed Mandalay-Kyaukphyu Railway project this week. A feasibility study on the first half of that rail project, which would link Mandalay and southern China's Kunming, was submitted during Xi Jinping's visit to Myanmar in January 2020. The rail link will connect southern China to the Indian Ocean, securing greater market access for China's underdeveloped southern provinces while reducing China's reliance on potential shipping choke-points. However, this railway project carries a high potential for land confiscation or forced acquisitions, threatening the livelihoods of local communities. Protests along the rail route are likely.

### Domestic sentiment

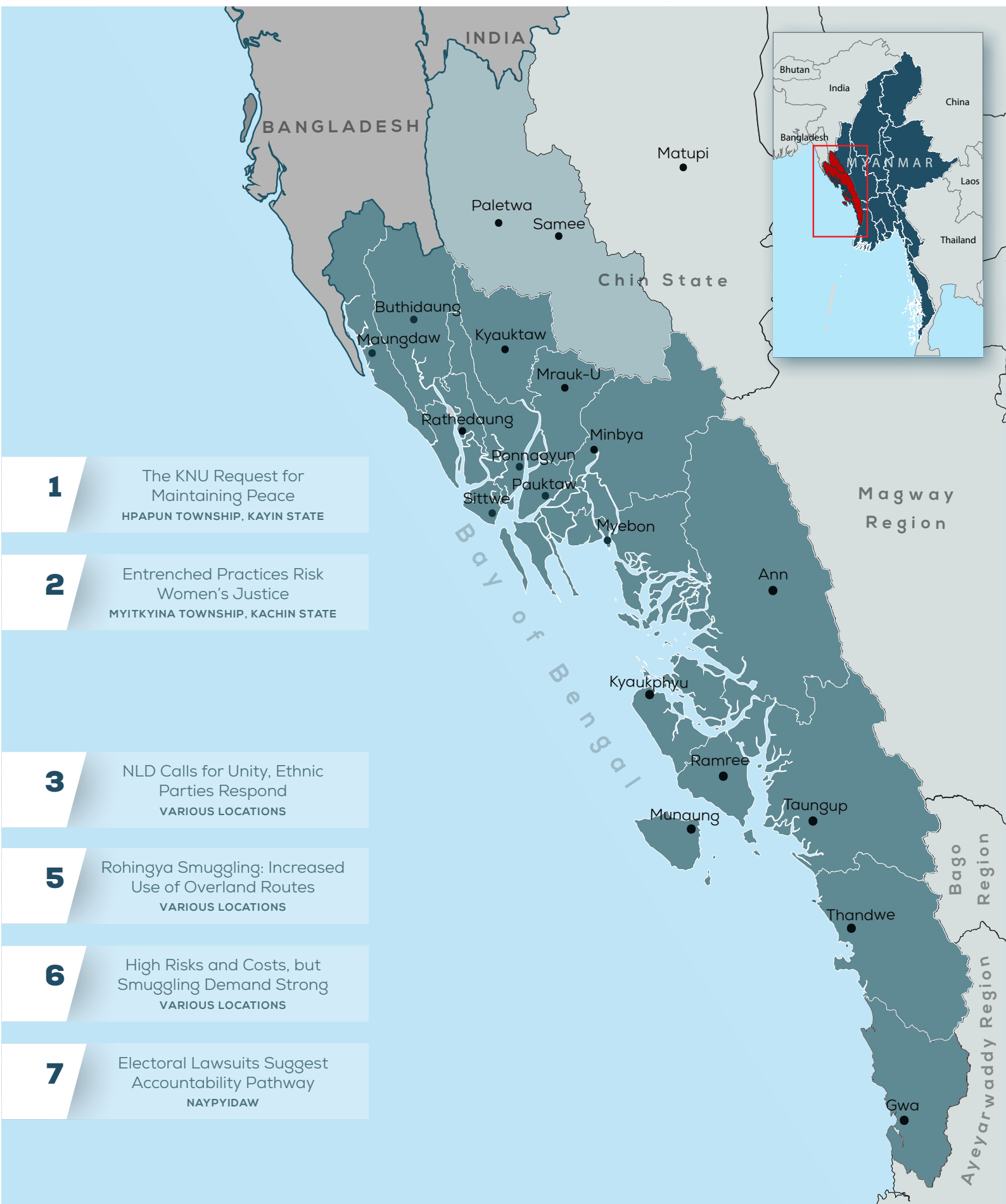
While concerns about overdependence on China are key to Myanmar's policy of non-alignment, so are worries about domestic anti-Chinese sentiment. China's image among Myanmar people has been damaged due to its association with the military government and its abuses against the people of Myanmar.

Investment projects linked to Chinese companies have become synonymous with land confiscation, human rights abuses and environmental degradation. 63 per cent of Chinese investment in projects in Myanmar are for hydropower dams on Myanmar's major rivers, which often threaten livelihoods, cause mass displacement or pollute waterways. According to a [survey of perceptions](#) towards Chinese investment among Myanmar people, in 2018, only 38 per cent saw China as a responsible investor.

### Humanitarian implications

For humanitarian agencies, this week's visit should act as a reminder of the unavoidable influence that China has in Myanmar, despite Myanmar's efforts to balance its foreign relations. While having reservations, the civilian government recognises that dealing with China is inevitable -- a result of proximity, politics, economics and infrastructure needs. China will continue to influence the central government, Tatmadaw and other armed groups.

Crucially, many of the infrastructure projects within the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor will pass through conflict-affected areas, and these capital injections risk making conditions for civilians worse. Before construction or any land acquisition begins, agencies should put in place measures to prepare for challenges. It is vital that local responders receive support to prepare for a response in hard-to-reach areas, while encouraging authorities and investors to listen to the voices of local communities. //



# 1 The KNU Request for Maintaining Peace

HPAPUN TOWNSHIP, KAYIN STATE

*Despite the commitment of most KNU leaders to the peace process, the government's delay in addressing the current tensions in Kayin State are prompting some hardliners in the KNU to mobilize internal support for leaving the NCA process, resulting in the recent escalation.*

On 8 January the Karen National Union (KNU) Central Committee **issued** a statement demanding the Tatmadaw work with them to prevent further clashes in Hpapun Township and other areas, claiming that such clashes are eroding trust and damaging the peace process. The KNU General Secretary, Pado Saw Ta Do Mu, **told Radio Free Asia** that the recent confrontations in the field were due to delays in discussing military issues previously agreed on by the two sides, leading to a decline in public confidence in the peace process. According to Pado Saw Ta Do Mu, the KNU has sent two letters to the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) and the Tatmadaw Peace Talk Committee to prevent an escalation in conflict, but the Tatmadaw has not responded. In its statement, the KNU recognised the public's concern and fear due to Tatmadaw troop presence and artillery strikes near villages, claiming they will take any necessary action to protect local communities. As mentioned in a **previous CASS Weekly Update**, tensions between the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Liberation Army rose in Hpapun Township in 2020 after the KNU demanded the Tatmadaw withdraw its troops from Me Waing village, which lies close to a controversial road project. In the meantime, the escalation of armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and the KNU's armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), have spread to other areas. Clashes between the two parties in Bago Region's Kyaukkyi Township displaced **more than 600 people** this week.

## Peace promise and pitfalls

According to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), both the Tatmadaw and the KNU agree to obtain prior agreement for troop movements in mixed-controlled areas and to protect civilians living in the conflict area. However, both the KNU and the Tatmadaw have accused each other of violating the terms. Despite the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committees (JMC) role in resolving field-level disputes, JMCs have proven dysfunctional and ineffectual, as discussed in this **previous CASS Weekly Update**. Despite the KNU requesting reform of the JMCs, both the Union-level JMC and the Tatmadaw have delayed responding. Meanwhile, armed clashes and civilian protests against the Tatmadaw in Hpapun Township have prompted the KNU to take action in order to maintain its reputation, legitimacy and internal solidarity. Despite the commitment of most KNU leaders to the peace process, the government's delay in addressing the current tensions in Kayin State are prompting some hardliners in the KNU to mobilize internal support for leaving the NCA process, resulting in the recent escalation. As the NCA plays such a crucial role in the peace process, advocacy to both the government and the Tatmadaw to respond to the KNU request for maintaining peace is crucial. Meanwhile, humanitarian organizations should maintain regular communications with local responders in the area to fill any response needs in the event of further displacement. //

# 2 Entrenched Practices Risk Women's Justice

MYITKYINA TOWNSHIP, KACHIN STATE

*... survivors are victimized to protect the dignity of families, relatives, ethnicity and institutions.*

A letter signed by 10 Kachin-based women's groups and local residents was sent to the Dugahtawng Ward Administration office in Myitkyina Township on 6 January. The letter raised concerns about the outcomes of an traditional informal dispute resolution process in the case of an alleged attempted child rape on 24 December. Household and community

elders handled the crime through an informal justice system and ruled that the alleged perpetrator be freed after paying a fine to the survivor's family. Three policemen from Myitkyina police station, including a sub-inspector, contacted the forensic pathologist who visited the patient but did not file a case. On 3 January, the Kachin State Police Commander's Office posted on Facebook [alleging](#) that the information about the case is incorrect, while publicising the names and addresses of the child and parents. Local women's organizations and others are calling for stronger action to be taken, and sent a request letter to the Ward Administration office (referenced online as "Justice for Sophia") under section 511 of the Myanmar Penal Code, attempted rape. In Kachin society, elders are drawn from the community, and are typically either 'trustworthy' men or resourceful elderly people. They mostly act as figure-heads, although they are often called on to settle crimes and social disputes. Children and women's rights lawyer and advocate, Daw Zar Li Htwe, commented to CASS that only 20 per cent of sexual violence cases against women and children are reported or filed by police, while most are settled through informal (customary) justice systems. These systems are mostly dictated by elder people on their own terms and according to their experience. While it is commonly believed that decisions are often made in favour of the aggrieved party, but Daw Htang Kai Nau, the Director of the Kachin Legal Aid Network Group, notes that in practice informal solutions are based on the impartiality of the community, traditional elders, and influential figures among the perpetrators' family and relatives. According to Kachin customary practices, if the offending party accepts the terms imposed, peace is declared and nothing more will be said or done.

### Misconceptions at women's cost

Female victims are the worst affected by these informal justice systems. The understanding of stakeholders and the structures of the legal institutions to protect people from sexual violence are weak, since knowledge-sharing is rare and there are few advocates to engage with. Instead, survivors are victimized to protect the dignity of families, relatives, ethnicity and institutions. This is an example of discrimination against Kachin women and girls, who are largely absent from decision-making roles and face stereotyping of gender norms. While the formal justice system has legal provisions and penalties, it takes time and is seen as causing burden and shame for survivors and their families. Therefore, many of the survivors resort to traditional systems, though this cannot help them obtain justice -- preferring instead to save the dignity of their families and relatives. In order to help curb and change such informal justice systems and social norms that are harmful for women, international actors and women's groups should

advocate for women rights and legal systems, and engage with community leaders, religious leaders, Kachin Cultural and Literature Association leaders, committee members and those involved in informal justice systems. It is not the abolition of the traditional system, but its reform which will guarantee the continuation of a proud tradition while protecting society's most vulnerable. //

## 3 Consultations Waived in Coastal Camp Closure

KYAUKPHYU TOWNSHIP, RAKHINE STATE

*Government decision-makers, who learnt their trade under an authoritarian regime, have little experience in consultation and have struggled to adapt to the government's own camp closure policy.*

On 21 December, Social Welfare minister U Win Myat Aye, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and other officials joined community leaders from Kyaukphyu Township's Kyauk Ta Lone camp for a [virtual meeting](#) regarding the ongoing camp closure process. In the meeting, authorities confirmed they were continuing with the plan to relocate the camp community to a site adjacent to the current camp. Camp residents reportedly remain opposed to relocating to the government-proposed relocation site (where no new construction has been done since May 2020), but report that maintaining their demands for return to place of origin is proving increasingly difficult. Long term financial stability in the camp is inducing an increasing number of people to sell their downtown properties. As such, there is greater interest in re-settling in Pike Seik ward of urban Kyaukphyu, which was destroyed by fire in 2012. This is made difficult by the fact that the residents of that land were displaced to Sittwe and Pauktaw townships in 2012 and remain there. Camp community members report that another acceptable location for relocation is the site of the old bus station in urban Kyaukphyu, as



the bus station is currently being relocated to a site out of town near the Kyauk Ta Lone camp. Meanwhile, ethnic Rakhine sources in downtown Kyaukphyu report good relations between communities, and suggest that the Rakhine community writ large would not oppose relocation of the Muslim community to either Pike Seik or the old bus station.

### Inclusive negotiations?

Government decision-makers, who learnt their trade under an authoritarian regime, have little experience in consultation and have struggled to adapt to the government's own camp closure policy. The consultations for the camp closure process in Kyaukphyu Township have been lacking in inclusivity, while previous camp closure processes in Kyauktaw and Myebon townships have resulted in camp communities relocated to new sites with very limited improvements to their conditions. In Kyaukphyu, negotiations with farmers linked to the government-proposed relocation site have reportedly been held up over compensation, and the original residents of Pike Seik, Muslims who mostly fled to Sittwe and Pauktaw townships in 2012, have been left out of the conversation. There is a clear need for the camp closure process to be consultative, to prioritise the desires of communities in camps in line with the government's own camp closure process. But there is also a need for recognition that government decision-makers are not accustomed to consultations and have little experience in this field. International agencies should identify those within government who are able to manage consultations and attempt to empower them. //

## 4 Government's Rakhine Enterprise Builds Rohingya Shelters

MAUNGDAW TOWNSHIP, NORTHERN RAKHINE STATE

According to Rakhine media outfit Narinjara, the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development (UEHRD) will build 500 houses across Maungdaw Township for Rohingya from the township who were displaced internally in the 2017 violence. Government officials interviewed by Narinjara said that the Rakhine State government had already published tender notices for

*There is no indication of participatory processes to identify or select locations for resettlement ...*

construction of those houses. The eight locations designated for relocations include two urban wards in Maungdaw town, two villages nearby the town, villages near Hla Poe Khaung Transit Centre and Ngar Khu Ya Reception Centre, and two more villages in northern and southern Maungdaw Township. Rohingya in the township have little knowledge of the process, or specifically who the shelters are designed for, suggesting that consultations have been limited. Local media Maungdaw Daily News shared on its Facebook page some photos of preliminary structures, and suggested they would be of poor quality. Another post from the same page also alleged that authorities were in violation of the 1894 Land Acquisition Act due to the lack of proper compensation to landowners, and questioned the potential forced resettlement of Rohingya IDPs. Some Rohingya activists have also similarly voiced concerns on this development.

### Non-negotiable resettlements

What is known about the new initiative to construct resettlement shelters for IDPs in Maungdaw Township suggest that the process will be marked by the same lack of transparency and consultation which mark other IDP camp closure processes in Rakhine State. There is no indication of participatory processes to identify or select locations for resettlement -- not only this recent development but also more broadly in the selection of at least 46 locations which it calls 'relocation sites' (as seen in a 2018 report by Reuters). While returning to their place of origin is one of the most important bottom-line demands of Rohingya IDPs and refugees, the Myanmar government, so far, has ignored such concerns and demands. On the contrary, the government has let other ethnic settlers and IDPs settle on the site of land where Rohingya villages used to sit. It has done infrastructure development projects and established the presence of security forces on Rohingya's land. All these indicate an intention of shrinking the distribution of Rohingya populations in northern Rakhine State by rejecting their right to return to their place of origin, and concentrating their populations in a limited number of relocation sites. //

## 5 Rohingya Smuggling: Increased Use of Overland Routes

### VARIOUS LOCATIONS

*... smugglers are turning to novel forms of transport, such as moving Rohingya in smaller groups and via land or mixed land/sea routes.*

In the last few weeks, there have been at least five reported group arrests of Rohingya travellers in different locations across Myanmar and abroad. The arrests took place in Myanmar's Bago Region, on the Thai border in Kayin State, in Yangon (twice), and in Bangkok. While social media users were preoccupied calling out the hypocrisy of a Buddhist monk attached to the 969 movement (which is known for its anti-Muslim rhetoric) smuggling Rohingya, prominent Muslim civil society leaders in Yangon publicly provided support to those arrested. It is not known whether those arrested will be charged, nor under what laws or regulations. Since April 2020, the government has sent Rohingya found to be travelling without the required paperwork directly back to Rakhine State, rather than imprisoning them, citing prison overcrowding fears during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, most arrested Rohingya were charged under the 1949 Residents of Burma Registration Act and sentenced up to two years in prison.

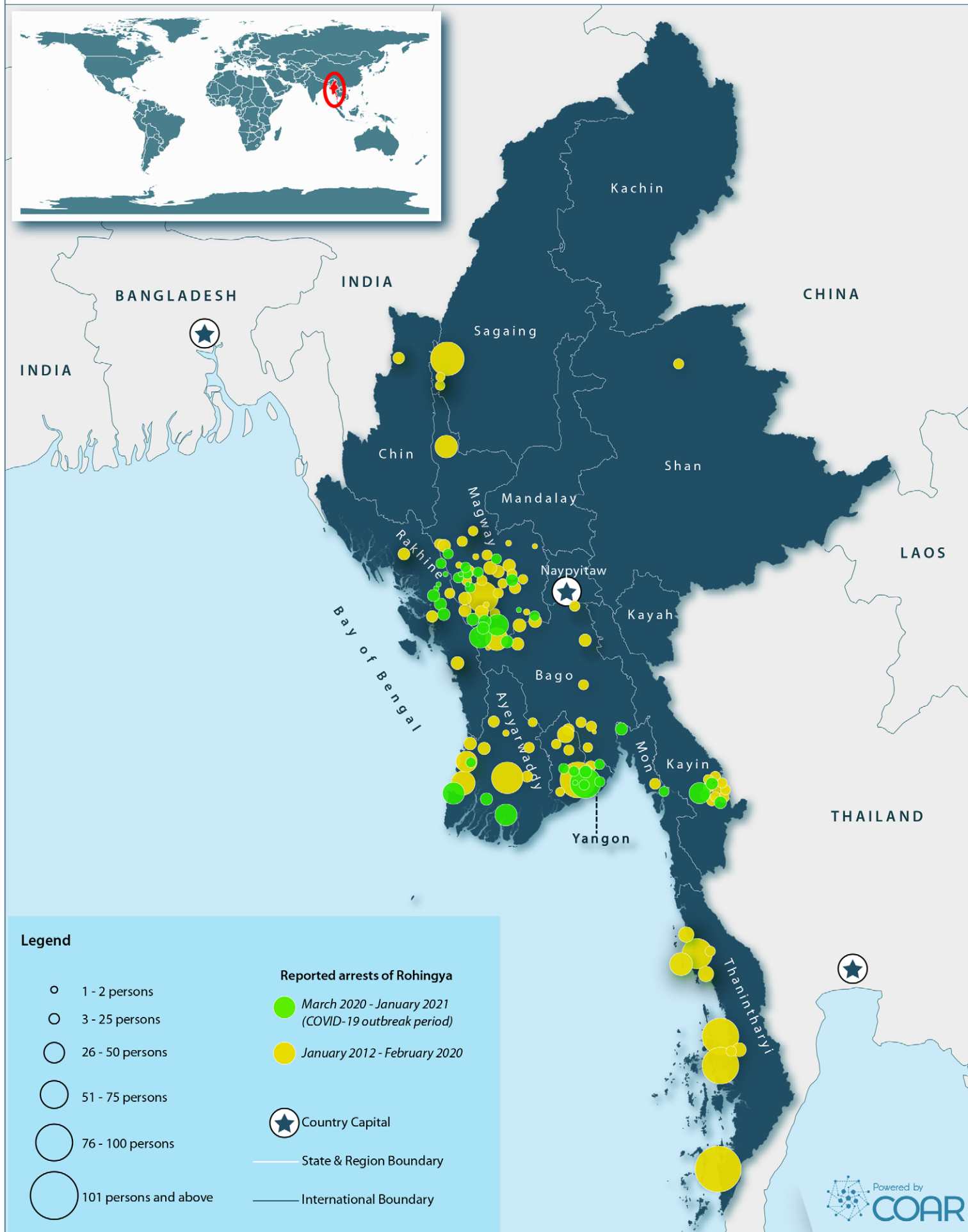
### Worth the risk?

Due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, it has become increasingly risky for large groups of Rohingya people to travel illegally by sea. This was previously a common means of transport, but COVID-19 restrictions on movement has made large groups conspicuous to locals, who are likely to report outsiders to local authorities. This is true both in Myanmar and abroad, where strict coastal surveillance by Thai, Indonesian and Malaysian navies guard against Rohingya arrivals. Against this background, in order to

increase the chances of success, the recent arrests suggest that smugglers are turning to novel forms of transport, such as moving Rohingya in smaller groups and via land or mixed land/sea routes. However, these routes are not safe from arrest either. Agencies may consider partnering with local CSOs to raise awareness for Rohingya in Rakhine State (and abroad), on the security risks associated with people smuggling, and on the increased sensitivity of foreign governments about border security during COVID-19. Such awareness raising can be done through local CSOs active in Rohingya communities, and through well known online Rohingya activists and Rohingya language news sites, in locations with access to the internet.

► [Look up Infographic on page 9: Reported Arrests of Rohingya for Unauthorised Travel Before and After COVID-19 Pandemic](#)





## 6 High Risks and Costs, but Smuggling Demand Strong

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

*Rohingya who are willing to migrate to Yangon may see the current timing as appropriate to take a calculated risk.*

Media reports and local sources suggest that the smuggling of Rohingya people out of Rakhine State has continued unabated, and perhaps even increased, during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite rising costs. As shown on the map above, there have been 42 group arrests of Rohingya travelling without required paperwork (and 496 people arrested in total) since COVID-19 hit Myanmar in March 2020. Before March 2020, Rohingya commonly paid between 1,500 USD and 5,000 USD per person for smuggling services, depending on the broker/smuggler, transportation and destination. However, sources report that the fee for transportation to Malaysia has risen to some 6,500 USD, due to COVID-19 difficulties. Smuggling activities are usually at their peak between September and March, due to drier weather and easy travel. This trend has continued this year. Recent reports suggest that the most common destination pursued by most Rohingya is Malaysia, followed by Yangon. The most common transit points in Myanmar are Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Magway regions while Kayin State is increasingly used. Many smugglers charge only if their journey is successful, and don't take a fee if passengers are arrested. In most cases, payment is agreed upon before travel and is made incrementally, after the passengers reach certain milestones in the journey -- a system justified by smugglers' costs and clients' safety. One risk is smuggling turning to trafficking -- when the broker demands more cash or otherwise exploits their passengers.

### Push and pull factors

Among Rohingya in Rakhine State (and also in the Bangladesh camps) there has long been strong demand for smuggling services due to the unfavourable conditions in camps and villages: poor living conditions, limited livelihood opportunities, movement restrictions and other systemic discrimination. Another reason for the consistent demand is that Rohingya men working abroad pay to smuggle their fiancée abroad for marriage, or other family members for reunion. Men from the community typically migrate first, resulting in an abundance of long distance relationships, virtual engagement and online marriage between Rohingya couples who are thousands of miles far away from one another. Finally, the Myanmar government's new policy to simply return those arrested, rather than jail them, may in part explain why smuggling continues at its usual scale despite COVID-19 restrictions and dangers. Rohingya who are willing to migrate to Yangon may see the current timing as appropriate to take a calculated risk. In Yangon, there is a large Muslim and Rohingya population from whom they can seek help, or easily blend into. //

## 7 Electoral Lawsuits Suggest Accountability Pathway

NAYPYIDAW

At a 8 January press conference, the President Office spokesperson, U Zaw Htay, remarked that political parties which filed lawsuits against the President and Union Election Commission (UEC) chair rejecting their 2020 landslide general election were committing political suicide. He **claimed** that no Hluttaw or Court has the power to question the President carrying out the functions of his office, citing the 2008 constitution article 215 and **Union Government Law article 43**. On 5 January, the Supreme Court **called** the President and other defendants to join a preliminary hearing related to the allegations of electoral fraud against the President and the UEC chair -- submitted by two

military-linked parties: the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP). Additionally, U Zaw Weik, a lawyer known for representing Buddhist nationalists, **filed law-suits** against four people, including President U Win Myint, while the DNP Party Chair U Soe Maung and the Union Solidarity and Development Party filed two other lawsuits against 15 people, including the chairman of the UEC, accusing them of electoral fraud. Despite unclear reasons for the lawsuit against the President, it is likely to accuse him of violating article 64 of the constitution, which prohibits the President from being involved in party campaign activities. On 29 January, the three judges will hold a preliminary hearing to determine whether the court accepts the filing or not, and their decision will be final.

### Exercising constitutional rights?

---

According to article 378 of the 2008 constitution, section a, and the **Law Relating to the Application of Writ**, citizens have the right to file a 'Writ' against government officials in the pursuit of ensuring fundamental rights, and the Supreme Court is responsible for investigation. In this case, the plaintiffs filed a 'Writ of Quo Warranto', claiming that "the President and some government officials are wrongfully exercising power beyond those authorized by their status".

This was the first time in ten years that the Supreme Court had called on the President to attend a hearing. Some advocates for judicial sector reform **welcomed** the Writ of Quo Warranto initiative, suggesting it can improve the judicial sector, protect civil rights, and counter abuses of power by public officials.

The lawsuit against the UEC chair for electoral fraud is likely to be thrown out after the preliminary hearing session, as article 402 of the 2008 constitution states that "the resolutions and functions made by the UEC on election functions shall be final and conclusive". However, the Supreme Court will need to decide whether or not to accept the lawsuit against the President and three Union Ministers for involvement in their party's electoral campaign activities, which contradicts article 64 and article 232 of the constitution. The Supreme Court may alternatively transfer that case to the Constitutional Tribunal Court which has the power to decide on constitutional matters. Whether or not the Supreme Court accepts the case, the political opposition's use of the legal platform to manage disputes should be appreciated. The filing of Writs for the protection of civil and political rights should be made accessible for the wider community, and agencies with legal mandates should promote awareness of this potential pathway to holding officials to account and mitigating the abuse of power. //

## // Other Developments

- The Tatmadaw has again **called for new polls** in Rakhine and Shan states, extending its deadline to 1 February. New elections seem increasingly unlikely, as the civilian government and Union Election Commission have given no indication they will back the polls, which are not possible under existing electoral laws.
- On 11 January the Rakhine State Parliament accepted without objection a proposal, submitted by an Arakan National Party member for Mrauk U, urging the Union Government to rescind the designation of the Arakan Army as a 'terrorist' organisation. The proposal is in part a performative last hurrah before the parliament session ends and the next convenes next month -- when it will have no Mrauk U Township representatives. The civilian government, meanwhile, has suggested it will follow the Tatmadaw's lead on revoking the designation.
- An unexploded bomb **detonated** this week in Minbya Township, Rakhine State, killing one person and injuring nine others. The lull in active clashes does not give any security guarantee to civilians, and agencies need to invest in mine risk education.
- Local sources in Dar Let village tract, Ann Township, report that although the Tatmadaw has opened a year-old blockade on water and road routes, inspections are common and civilians are not allowed to carry large quantities of rice. Regardless, some 10 to 20 IDP households are estimated to have returned to the village in January to date. The continued restrictions suggest that the Tatmadaw's 'four cuts' strategy remains in place, despite the absence of active clashes.
- The government has **announced** it will double salaries for civil servants working in Paletwa Township for 4 months until the end of March. The salary is an incentive for staff to live and work in the remote, conflict-affected township, and a reflection of the dangers for government staff in Arakan Army influenced areas.
- Sources close to the Paletwa Township Health Department have confirmed that more than five locally-transmitted COVID-19 cases have been detected and about 15 people are now confined to home quarantine. IDP sites in the Township are particularly vulnerable and agencies should ensure preparatory measures are in place.

MYANMAR *weekly* UPDATE / WHAT TO WATCH THIS WEEK / KEY READINGS

## // What to Watch This Week

- 16 January is the third anniversary of a violent crackdown on Mrauk U protests in which seven people were killed. In 2018, a group of Mrauk U residents stormed a government office after authorities cancelled events to commemorate the 223rd anniversary of the fall of the Mrauk U kingdom to the Burmese in 1784. The killings were seen as a key moment in mobilising support for the Arakan Army.

## // Key Readings

- Bertil Lintner **shares** how Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand have been impacted by the recent COVID-19 outbreak, which was traced to Myanmar migrant workers -- and suggests that the blame is misdirected.



This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.



COAR is an independent social enterprise that supports the international community to navigate and adapt policy, programs, and projects to emerging and progressively complex, fragile, and high-risk environments. Based on knowledge of affected populations and a deep understanding of their respective political, economic, social, security, and environmental systems and stakeholders, COAR builds a blueprint for humanitarian, stabilization, early recovery, social-cohesion, resilience and development-focused interventions.

© 2020 Center for Operational Analysis and Research  
(COAR Global LTD).

The CASS Weekly Update is by no means exhaustive and does not necessarily reflect CASS's position. Contributing information sources include public and non-public humanitarian information provided by open traditional and social media sources, local and international agencies, and sources on the ground. The provided information and assessment is designated for humanitarian purposes only and is not for public distribution or quotation.

[info@cass-mm.org](mailto:info@cass-mm.org)  
[www.cass-mm.org](http://www.cass-mm.org)