

— AUGUST 2025 —

Myanmar Institute Newsletter



Myanmar Military Planning Sham Elections



Dear Readers,

August unfolds with the junta's announcement of elections in December, a move framed as a step toward stability but received with widespread condemnation, as international organizations have already denounced the process as illegitimate, and diaspora communities and activists abroad decry the attempt to whitewash authoritarian rule. Within Myanmar, revolutionary networks that once celebrated the promise of change now find themselves entangled in disillusion, with many citizens—drained by years of sacrifice—openly expressing doubt over whether the opposition leadership has the capacity or unity to offer a real alternative, turning revolutionary fatigue into a public refrain that alters the moral landscape of resistance itself.

The deepening divide is evident in the everyday life of conflict: online, support for the NUG and PDF has given way to an avalanche of criticism, some accusing them of failing to coordinate or protect civilians, while on the ground, the war takes its own toll as the military reasserts control over parts of Bamoh and Nyaungcho and Thibaw and Kyaukme endure relentless bombardment. At the Thai border, the junta's closure of crossings threatens to sever vital arteries of trade and resupply for KNU forces and allied groups, leaving resistance territories once sustained by border economies to confront a tightening noose, with shortages and displacement compounding the sense of fragility and the battlefield measured as much in eroding confidence as in territory.

Meanwhile, the revolution enters a new and more uncertain phase as the junta consolidates its grip through both arms and institutions, seeking to cloak coercion in the guise of electoral legitimacy while opposition forces—though still active across much of the country—face shrinking resources, waning public trust, and encirclement by military advances. For civilians caught in between, the question is less about ideology and more about survival—whether they can withstand yet another cycle of war without relief, reform, or reconciliation—and as December approaches, the contours of Myanmar's struggle are being redrawn not by the promise of elections but by the harsh realities of exhaustion, attrition, and an unfinished fight, leaving the question looming: what comes after the generals' sham election?

Carolyn & Richard

— JULI 2025 —

Myanmar Institute Newsletter



Liebe LeserInnen,

Der August beginnt mit der Ankündigung der Junta, im Dezember Wahlen abzuhalten – ein Schritt, der als Beitrag zur Stabilität präsentiert wird, aber auf breite Kritik stößt. Internationale Organisationen verurteilen den Prozess als illegitim, während Diaspora-Gemeinschaften und AktivistInnen im Exil den Versuch, die autoritäre Herrschaft schönzureden, scharf zurückweisen. Innerhalb Myanmars sind revolutionäre Netzwerke, die einst Hoffnung auf Veränderung schürten, von Desillusionierung geprägt. Viele BürgerInnen, erschöpft von jahrelangen Opfern, zweifeln an der Fähigkeit der Oppositionsführung, eine echte Alternative zu bieten. Diese Müdigkeit verändert den Widerstand.

Die sich vertiefende Kluft zeigt sich im Alltag: Im Netz schwindet die Unterstützung für die NUG und die PDF, KritikerInnen werfen ihnen Koordinationsprobleme und mangelnden Zivilschutz vor. Bewaffnete Auseinandersetzungen fordern ebenso weiterhin ihren Tribut: Teile von Bamoh und Nyaungcho wurden vom Militär zurückerobert, während Thibaw und Kyaukme unter Dauerbeschuss stehen. An der thailändischen Grenze drohen geschlossene Grenzübergänge, wodurch Handels- und Nachschubwege für die KNU-Streitkräfte und Verbündete unterbrochen würden. Widerstandsgebiete, die einst von der Grenzökonomie lebten, finden sich in einer immer enger werdenden Lage mit Versorgungsengpässen und Vertreibungen, was das Gefühl der Fragilität verstärkt. Das Schlachtfeld erweitert sich: Es geht nicht mehr nur um Territorien, sondern auch um das schwindende Vertrauen der Bevölkerung.

Gleichzeitig tritt die Revolution in eine neue, ungewissere Phase ein: Die Junta festigt ihre Macht sowohl mit Waffen als auch durch Institutionen und versucht, Zwang unter dem Deckmantel legitimer Wahlen zu verschleiern. Die oppositionellen Kräfte sehen sich mit schwindenden Ressourcen, sinkendem Vertrauen und zunehmendem militärischen Druck konfrontiert. Für die Zivilbevölkerung, die zwischen den Fronten steht, zählt weniger die Ideologie als das Überleben. Es geht darum, ob sie einen weiteren Kriegszyklus ohne Entlastung, Reformen oder Versöhnung überstehen kann. Mit dem Herannahen des Dezembers zeichnen sich die Konturen des Kampfes in Myanmar neu, nicht durch das Versprechen von Wahlen, sondern durch Erschöpfung und Ressourcenknappheit.

Carolyn & Richard



Events in September 2025

5th Conference on Asian Studies (DGA)

📍 University of Bonn, Germany

📅 9–11 September 2025

The German Association for Asian Studies (DGA) gathers scholars across Asia fields — including Southeast Asia — for panels, keynotes and networking. Useful for Myanmar watchers following regional scholarship and policy debates.



“Shan Archive Living!” — Workshop on Shan manuscripts & living traditions

📍 SOAS University of London (Hybrid), UK

📅 8 September 2025

Hands-on workshop spotlighting Shan Buddhist manuscripts and practices, with contributors from Shan State and researchers working on Myanmar borderlands.



“Myanmar – State of Uncertainty” (Photography Exhibition)

📍 Willy-Brandt-Haus, Berlin, Germany

📅 Through 21 September 2025

A multi-artist show capturing Myanmar’s people and politics through images — still on view into September.



**Contributions may be sent to
newsletter@myanmar-institut.org.**



Veranstaltungen im September 2025

Konferenz für Asienwissenschaften (DGA)

📍 Universität Bonn, Deutschland
📅 9.–11. September 2025

Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Asienkunde (DGA) versammelt Wissenschaftler:innen aus verschiedenen Bereichen der Asienforschung – einschließlich Südostasien – zu Panels, Keynotes und Netzwerkveranstaltungen. Besonders interessant für Myanmar-Beobachter:innen, die regionale Forschung und politische Debatten verfolgen.



„Shan Archive Living!“ – Workshop zu Shan-Handschriften & lebendigen Traditionen

📍 SOAS University of London (Hybrid), Großbritannien
📅 8. September 2025

Praktischer Workshop mit Fokus auf Shan-buddhistische Manuskripte und Traditionen, mit Beiträgen aus dem Shan-Staat sowie Forschenden zu den Grenzregionen Myanmars.



„Myanmar – State of Uncertainty“ (Fotoausstellung)

📍 Willy-Brandt-Haus, Berlin, Deutschland
📅 Bis 21. September 2025

Eine Gruppenausstellung mehrerer Künstler:innen, die das Leben und die Politik Myanmars in eindrucksvollen Fotografien dokumentiert – noch bis September zu sehen.



**Contributions may be sent to
newsletter@myanmar-institut.org.**

Publications

Peer Reviewed

- Meehan, Patrick, Mandy Sadan, and Dan Seng Lawn (2025) 'The Myanmar borderlands as a green energy transition 'sacrifice zone': A case study of rare earth mining in Kachin state', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, Volume 22, 2025.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2024.101579>.
- Bu, S. and Matelski, M. (2025) 'Myanmar Diaspora's Long-Distance Activism in the Netherlands after the 2021 Military Coup', *Ethnopolitics*, pp. 1–22. doi: 10.1080/17449057.2025.2512665.
- Khai, T.S. (2025) 'Unsafe at Home and Vulnerable Abroad: The Struggle of Forgotten Myanmar Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Thailand Post-Coup d'état', *Social Sciences*, 14(4), p. 245. DOI: 10.3390/socsci14040245
- D'Apice, C. & Guasconi, M. (2025) 'International Partnerships in Health Education: Adapting E-Learning Models for Conflict-Affected Myanmar', *Healthcare*, 13(3), p. 285. DOI: 10.3390/healthcare13030285

Non-Peer Reviewed

- Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar (2025) 'Unearthing the Cost: Rare Earth Mining in Myanmar's War-Torn Regions' (<https://ispmyanmar.com/unearthing-the-cost-rare-earth-mining-in-myanmars-war-torn-regions/>)
- The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlights deepening crises driven by conflict, floods, and aid obstructions, affecting over 18 million people in need.

Books & Monographs

- Lintner, B. (2024). *The Golden Land Ablaze: Coups, Insurgents and the State in Myanmar*. London: Hurst & Company.



Audio & Visual Media

Broken Dreams: Myanmar's Displaced Youth

Produced by: Al Jazeera Witness
Directed by: Documentary Unit, Al Jazeera English
Released: May 10, 2025
Duration: 25 minutes

Link:
<https://www.aljazeera.com/program/witness/2025/5/10/broken-dreams-myanmar-displaced-youth>

This moving short film follows young people uprooted from Karenni State in the aftermath of civil war. Through intimate portraits, it reveals their struggles for education, work, and dignity in exile. "Broken Dreams" portrays the resilience of Myanmar's displaced youth while exposing the systemic obstacles that threaten their futures.



Myanmar: The Rebel Army

Produced by: DECOUPAGES
Directed by: Antoine Vèdeilhe
Released: 1 March 2024
Duration: 37 minutes
Link:
<https://www.arte.tv/en/videos/118107-000-A/arte-reportage/topsvet.ru+6arte.tv+6arte.tv+6arte.tv>

In this riveting 37-minute ARTE Reportage, Myanmar: The Rebel Army chronicles how, following the abrupt end of Myanmar's decade-long democratic transition in the February 2021 coup, thousands of young city-dwellers—men and women—forsook their urban lives to join the armed resistance against the junta. The documentary offers a rare, intimate view inside rebel-held areas, exposing the improvised warfare, makeshift weapons, and the resilience of the nascent PDF (People's Defense Forces). Filmed clandestinely, it captures not only battlefronts but also the fragile pulse of life amidst rebellion—schools reopening, local businesses operating, even soldiers gathering in impromptu community hubs—a striking portrait of life and defiance in Myanmar's liberated zones.



Contributions may be sent to
newsletter@myanmar-institut.org

Noteworthy News

Junta Announces December Elections

On 18 August 2025, Myanmar's military junta declared that the country will hold general elections beginning on 28 December 2025 – the first since the 2021 coup. Officials framed it as a “step-by-step” process towards restoring democracy, but opposition parties immediately announced a boycott. Observers described the move as a façade designed to entrench military power, with little chance for a free and fair contest.

📌 Source: Der Spiegel, 18 August 2025; Al Jazeera, 18 August 2025

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/18/myanmars-military-government-announces-elections-for-december-28?utm_source=chatgpt.com

UN Probe Reveals Systemic Torture

On 12 August 2025, the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) released evidence of systemic torture inside detention facilities. Survivors described brutal methods including electric shocks, strangulation, and fingernail removal with pliers. Investigators identified senior military figures among those responsible. The findings add to mounting calls for international prosecution of Myanmar's junta leadership.

📌 Source: AP News, 12 August 2025; Al Jazeera, 12 August 2025

KNU Declared a Terrorist Organization

On 28 August 2025, the military government officially designated the Karen National Union (KNU) a terrorist group. The decision criminalizes any contact with Myanmar's oldest ethnic resistance movement and escalates repression in Karen areas. Analysts say the move is aimed at discrediting ethnic armed groups ahead of the December elections.

📌 Source: AP News, 28 August 2025
apnews.com



**Contributions may be sent to
newsletter@myanmar-institut.org.**

Proposals and Jobs

Call for Proposals

The Ford Foundation - Research Grants for Myanmar

Provides funding for academic and applied research projects that address pressing social issues, including media freedom, human rights, and public policy in Myanmar.

- Grant Amount: Up to \$100,000
- Deadline: October 1, 2025
- Eligibility: Open to researchers, universities, and institutions in Myanmar and Southeast Asia.
- Contact: grants@fordfoundation.org
- [Application Link: Research Grants for Myanmar](#)

Call for applications

Doctoral Researchers (m/f/d, E13 TV-L, 75%)

DFG Research Training Group 3105
“Figurations of the Precarious in the Global South”

Deadline: September 15, 2025

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Global South Studies at the University of Tübingen invites applications for 6 doctoral positions (E 13 TV-L, 75%, temporary positions for 4 years) that will form part of our Research Training Group 3105, starting April 1, 2026.

<https://uni-tuebingen.de/forschung/forschungsschwerpunkte/graduierntenkollegs/grk-figurationen-des-prekaeren-im-globalen-sueden/call-for-applications/#c2327112>



**Contributions may be sent to
newsletter@myanmar-institut.org.**