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## BEYOND RAKHINE: ARAKAN ARMY ADVANCE BRINGS HOPE AND FEAR

The AA’s offensives into neighbouring regions together with its resistance allies have brought Myanmar’s civil war to new corners of the country – and put the group within striking distance of key munitions factories.

In March, Myanmar’s civil war finally came to U Sein Myint’s village in Lemyethna Township. Residents of nearby farming communities began fleeing military airstrikes, as regime forces sought to push back Arakan Army troops advancing into



The AA offensive into Ayeyarwady followed the group’s capture of Gwa Township in late December. After seizing the southernmost part of Rakhine State, AA forces began pushing over the foothills of the Rakhine Yoma mountain range into

this normally quiet corner of northwestern Ayeyarwady Region.

Sein Myint, who requested the use of a pseudonym to protect his identity, knew it was only a matter of time until the bombs also began raining down on the home he shared with his brother and sister in Pan Taw Gyi, a village on the Patheingyi-Monywa highway about 130 kilometres’ drive north of the region’s capital Patheingyi.

With the fighting edging closer by the day, they took the difficult decision to leave.

“We could tell the situation was getting worse, so at the beginning of April, before Thingyan, we went and stayed with a friend in Hinthada” located about 60km east of Pan Taw Gyi, he said.

It turned out to be the right decision. Less than two weeks later, the village was hit by airstrikes and artillery fire, burning some houses and forcing the remaining residents to flee. “I heard our house wasn’t damaged, but I haven’t been able to go back and see it for myself, so I’m not sure,” Sein Myint told Frontier in late April.

the delta, thrusting east into Yegyi Township, and south into Patheingyi Township.

The AA has since attacked numerous points along the Patheingyi-Monywa highway, a 750-kilometre two-lane road that runs north-south between the Rakhine Yoma and the west bank of the Ayeyarwady River. The military has responded by increasing security and restricting traffic flows, as it seeks to retain control of the critically important route.

■ Source: frontiermyanmar.net

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9 June, 2025Last week in Geneva, the International Labour Conference (ILC) took a historic step, invoking Article 33 of the ILO Constitution against Myanmar’s military junta. This rare move holds the regime accountable for grave and persistent violations of workers’ and human rights.



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# NO YOUTH, NO FUTURE FOR MYANMAR

Myanmar's youth have been leading anti-military resistance efforts following the February 2021 coup. A political solution is necessary to Myanmar's crisis, and the youth must play a central role in this process. The youth advocate for a federal democratic future, addressing past injustices and promoting social equity. Their inclusion in political dialogues and peace processes is vital to achieving meaningful change and guiding Myanmar towards a sustainable future.

Following the military coup of February 2021, Myanmar has become one of the most militarised societies in the region. This transformation has had a particularly detrimental impact on the lives and futures of its young people who are leading resistance. It is time to put Myanmar's youth at the heart of its political future.

In response to the violent crackdown on peaceful protests, more than 300 People's Defense Force battalions (PDF) — largely composed of youth, with or without formal affiliation to the National Unity Government — have emerged across the country. At the same time, the military has intensified forced conscription, targeting males under 35 and females under 27, further exacerbating militarisation.

More than four years into this turmoil, the military's authority remains deeply contested. Significant swaths of territory are under the control of PDFs and longstanding ethnic revolutionary organisations. Peace remains a distant dream.



Yet even the military regime, along with international actors like ASEAN and the United Nations, implicitly understands a fundamental truth — Myanmar's crisis cannot be resolved by military means. A political solution is the only viable path forward. The pressing question is not if, but how, to realise this solution.

The junta has floated plans to hold elections in late 2025 or early 2026, claiming this will mark a return to relative stability. But without credible guarantees for the inclusion of key parties — like the National League for Democracy and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy — such elections risk being hollow exercises. Even if they participate, the prevailing political turmoil casts serious doubt on the possibility of meaningful contestation. In Arakan State, where the Arakan Army — a powerful ethnic armed group — has significant control over

many areas, elections will be extremely difficult to conduct and unlikely to foster stability.

More fundamentally, elections alone do not amount to a political solution. Genuine progress must begin by acknowledging and engaging a constituency that is too often sidelined — Myanmar's youth. Ignoring their voices — when they have already paid a high price for their vision of a better future — would not only be unjust, but self-defeating.

Myanmar's history offers valuable lessons. Young leaders like Aung San spearheaded the independence movement, whose bold ideas shaped the birth of the nation. Today's youth are once again stepping forward — armed not just with resistance, but with a serious commitment to justice and a belief in a more inclusive Myanmar.

This is not unique to Myanmar. In neighbouring Bangladesh, youth-led protests played a decisive role in ending Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 16-year rule in 2024...

■ Source: eastasiaforum.org