

# Peacebuilding Commission



# The question of Myanmar





<b>Forum</b>	Peacebuilding Commission
<b>Issue:</b>	The Question of Myanmar
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## Introduction

Myanmar has been tied in a long-lasting and multilateral conflict that has had a significant impact on its population. Myanmar has had its hands full with political and human rights issues. This introduction provides a brief overview of the conflict, focusing on its complexity, historical context and devastating impact on the country and its people.

Ethnic divisions and struggles for independence among various ethnic minorities are largely responsible for the Myanmar conflict. This tension stems from historical grievances, resource allocation differences, and identity and representation issues. The Rohingya crisis has attracted international attention due to the widespread persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority, particularly in Rakhine State, including violence, displacement and restrictions on basic rights. The Rohingya crisis is not the only major problem that the country has faced since its independence.

The origins of the conflict can be traced back to Myanmar's colonial past under British rule, which exacerbated ethnic divisions and sowed the seeds of discontent among various ethnic groups. After independence in 1948, the country experienced periods of political failure, instability, military coups and authoritarian rule. A military bloc known as the National Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has ruled Myanmar for decades, suppressing opposition and fuelling ethnic tensions. The country has been divided due to the multiple issues that it is facing. It is vastly important to focus on a peaceful and concluding ending to this conflict.



## Definition of Key Terms

### Rohingya

The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority group primarily residing in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. They have faced severe persecution, including violence, displacement, and restrictions on their basic rights, resulting in a major humanitarian crisis.

### Ethnic Armed Groups

Ethnic armed groups in Myanmar are various non-state armed organizations representing different ethnic minority groups. These groups have engaged in armed struggles against the central government, seeking greater autonomy or political representation for their respective communities.

### Tatmadaw

The Tatmadaw is the official name for the military in Myanmar. It has played a dominant role in the country's politics and governance, often controlling key institutions and influencing policy decisions.

### Human Rights Abuses

Human rights abuses refer to violations of individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms, including but not limited to arbitrary arrests, torture, forced labour, extrajudicial killings, and restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and religion.

### Displacement

Displacement refers to the forced movement of individuals or communities from their homes or places of origin due to conflict, violence, or persecution. In the context of Myanmar, displacement has been a significant consequence of the conflict, leading to the displacement of millions of people, both internally and as refugees in neighbouring countries.

### Peace Process



The peace process in Myanmar refers to the ongoing efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement and peaceful resolution to the country's conflicts. It involves dialogues, negotiations, and ceasefire agreements between the central government, ethnic armed groups, and other stakeholders with the aim of achieving sustainable peace and stability.

### **Reconciliation**

Reconciliation involves the process of healing, forgiveness, and rebuilding relationships between different groups or communities after a period of conflict or division. In the context of Myanmar, reconciliation efforts aim to address grievances and promote understanding and coexistence among different ethnic and religious groups.

### **International Humanitarian Assistance**

International humanitarian assistance refers to the provision of aid, support, and resources from the international community to address the immediate humanitarian needs of affected populations. In the case of Myanmar, international humanitarian assistance aims to provide shelter, food, healthcare, and other essential services to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

### **Accountability**

Accountability refers to the principle of holding individuals or entities responsible for their actions and ensuring that justice is served for human rights abuses and violations. In the context of the Myanmar conflict, accountability includes efforts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other violations of international law.



## General Overview

### Historical Background

Formerly known as Burma, Myanmar has a rich and complex history that has shaped its current situation. Conflict in Myanmar can be traced back to the colonial period when the country was under British rule from the late 19th century until 1948. During this period, the British implemented policies that widened ethnic divisions and sowed unsatisfactory seeds among the various races used. The struggle for independence and the formation of a new state further deepened this division.

After gaining independence in 1948, Myanmar faced political instability, characterized by a series of military coups and authoritarian regimes. A military bloc called the National Peace and Development Council (SPDC) took control of the country in 1988 and ruled for decades. The military regime pursued policies that stifled dissent, curtailed civil liberties, and marginalized ethnic minorities. These actions further exacerbated ethnic tensions and created fertile ground for conflict.

### Ethnic Tensions and Armed Groups

Myanmar is made up of different ethnic groups, each with its own unique language, culture and aspirations. These ethnic groups have long sought greater autonomy, cultural preservation and political representation. However, the central government was opposed to their demands. As a result, various armed ethnic groups emerged, representing various ethnic minorities and advocating for their rights and interests.

The Myanmar army, the Tatmadaw, and several armed ethnic groups are making weapons. These conflicts stem mainly from the desire for self-determination, resource consumption and political independence. Armed groups rebelled against the government, causing violence, displacement and human suffering. The conflict between the Tatmadaw and armed tribes has contributed greatly to the prolongation of the conflict in Myanmar.

### The Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis represents one of the most serious humanitarian challenges in Myanmar. The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority centred in Rakhine State. They have faced decades of systematic discrimination, denial of citizenship and severe restrictions on basic rights. In



2017, when a military crackdown targeting the Rohingya dramatically escalated the situation, leading to widespread violence, mass displacement and allegations of human rights abuses came

The military's actions led to the displacement of large numbers of Rohingya refugees, with hundreds of thousands fleeing to neighbouring Bangladesh. The UN and several human rights organizations have characterized the situation as ethnic cleansing and raised concerns about possible genocide. The Rohingya crisis has attracted international attention, calling on the Myanmar government to check if Rohingya displaced have returned safely, not grant them citizenship rights and address the root causes of the conflict.

### Human Rights Abuses and Accountability

Myanmar has been widely criticised for its human rights abuses, particularly in relation to the treatment of ethnic minorities. Under the military regime, the country witnessed massive human rights violations including enforced killings, disappearances, torture, sexual violence, suppressing the freedom of expression and assembly, etc. International community rights organizations have documented these violations and have been of concern to the international community.

Efforts to obtain accountability for these human rights abuses have been difficult. Limited access to information, lack of transparency, and military reluctance to cooperate with investigations have hindered progress in the pursuit of justice. The establishment of an independent and impartial judicial system, as well as establishing the solidarity of all stakeholders, is critical to ensuring accountability for past and ongoing human rights violations. The military junta responded to mass demonstrations with a nationwide campaign of mass killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, and indiscriminate attacks that amounted to crimes against humanity and, in conflict areas, war crimes. Since the coup of February 2021, junta authorities have arbitrarily arrested more than 16,000 pro-democracy supporters. Many former detainees alleged torture or other ill-treatment, such as sexual violence, during their detention. One journalist recounted after his release that guards raped and beat him in detention.

### Socio-economic Impacts

In Myanmar, the conflict has had a significant socio-economic impact on the country and its people. Poverty, inequality and underdevelopment are common issues, especially in areas affected by conflict. Communities displaced by violence and insecurity have hampered livelihoods and increased their reliance on humanitarian aid. Displaced people face challenges in accessing education, health



care and basic services, exacerbating their vulnerability and hindering their ability to rebuild their lives. An estimated 1,704,000 internally displaced people were reported across the country. The conflict has also had a significant socio-economic impact on Myanmar as a whole. Continued violence and instability have hampered economic growth, deterring foreign investment and impeding economic growth. The country has struggled to address structural issues such as poverty, unemployment and inadequate infrastructure, which have widened socio-economic disparities across sectors and communities

## Major Parties Involved

### Myanmar

The Tatmadaw is the official armed forces of Myanmar and has significant influence over the country's political affairs. It has been actively involved in the conflict, engaging in clashes with ethnic armed groups and exerting control over various regions. The Tatmadaw's actions and policies have significant implications for the overall dynamics of the conflict.

### Rohingya

The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority group primarily residing in the Rakhine state, have faced severe persecution and violence, leading to a significant humanitarian crisis. Their dangerous situation has garnered international attention, with many countries and organizations expressing concern and providing assistance to Rohingya refugees in neighbouring countries.

### China

China has a keen interest in Myanmar due to its scenic location, natural resources and economic opportunities. It has historically had close ties with the Myanmar government and played a mediating role in negotiations between the government and armed tribes. China's involvement in the manufacturing industry and economic investments in Myanmar contributes to its influence in the country.

### United States of America (USA)



The USA has been actively engaged in the Myanmar conflict, expressing concerns about human rights abuses and advocating for democratic reforms. It has imposed targeted sanctions on individuals and entities implicated in human rights violations and has provided support to civil society organizations and initiatives promoting peace, human rights, and democratic governance in Myanmar.

### Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The ASEAN member states; Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, have been involved in efforts to address the Myanmar conflict. ASEAN has played a role in facilitating dialogue, promoting stability, and supporting humanitarian initiatives. It has encouraged Myanmar's engagement with regional mechanisms to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

### Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been directly affected by the Rohingya crisis as a neighbouring country. It has provided shelter and support to a large number of Rohingya refugees who have fled violence in Myanmar. Bangladesh has played a crucial role in advocating for its rights and seeking international assistance to address the humanitarian crisis.

### Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
January 4 <sup>th</sup> 1948	Burma gained independence
March 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1962	Military coup by Ne Win
August 8 <sup>th</sup> 1988	Nationwide protests, known as 8-8-88
May 27 <sup>th</sup> 1990	National League for Democracy founded by Aung San Suu Kyi wins elections
November 7 <sup>th</sup> 2010	Pro-junta party wins Myanmar's first elections in 20 years boycotted as unfair and rigged in its favour
April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2012	Suu Kyi wins election for Parliament
November 8 <sup>th</sup> 2015	NLD wins general elections, military retained significant power under a constitution
August 25 <sup>th</sup> 2017	Insurgents attack military outposts in the western state of Rakhine, killing dozens. The military responds with crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim population.
December 11 <sup>th</sup> 2019	Suu Kyi denies genocide by military in ICJ
November 8 <sup>th</sup> 2020	NLD secures majority in elections





February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021

Military takes control of the country under a one-year state of emergency, citing the government's failure to act on its fraud claims.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Resolution 2669, 21 December 2022 (S/RES/2669(2022))

## Possible Solutions

The Myanmar conflict presents a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach to achieve a sustainable resolution. Focusing on socioeconomic development initiatives in conflict-affected areas is crucial. Enhancing access to education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities can help alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities, and contribute to the overall stability of the country. Upholding human rights, ending impunity, and ensuring accountability for past and ongoing human rights abuses are essential. Establishing truth and reconciliation processes, supporting transitional justice mechanisms, and addressing grievances through legal avenues can help promote healing and foster a culture of respect for human rights. Facilitating inclusive and meaningful dialogue between the central government, ethnic armed groups, and other stakeholders is crucial. Negotiations should address the root causes of the conflict, including political representation, resource sharing, and cultural rights. The Myanmar conflict should be handled carefully since it is such a complex situation.



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