

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Anjali Manhas

Myanmar Earthquake Impact and Initial Response

Timeline of Events:

- **March 28, 2025: 7.7 Magnitude Earthquake:** Myanmar experienced the strongest earthquake in a century, with a 7.7 magnitude quake causing widespread destruction across central Myanmar. The earthquake led to over 3,600 deaths and significant damage to hospitals, government buildings, and infrastructure. Power and water outages were reported in affected areas, complicating the relief efforts. (Sources: Reuters ; The Diplomat, Aljazeera)
- **April 2, 2025: Ceasefire Declaration:** The military junta in Myanmar announced a temporary ceasefire until April 22, 2025, in an effort to ease tensions and allow for humanitarian aid. Simultaneously, the Three Brotherhood Alliance (comprising the MNDAA, TNLA, and AA) declared a one-month unilateral ceasefire. The National Unity Government had earlier announced a two-week ceasefire to contribute to peace efforts. (Sources: The Diplomat ; Aljazeera)
- **April 3-10, 2025: Ceasefire Violations:** Despite the declared ceasefires, the military continued to conduct numerous airstrikes, particularly in earthquake-affected regions. These attacks resulted in civilian casualties, including in Sagaing Region and Chin State, where schools, food courts, and residential areas were targeted, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. (Sources: The Irrawady ; NUG Myanmar ; Myanmar Witness)
- **April 15, 2025: International Aid Efforts:** International efforts to assist Myanmar's affected population have been ongoing, with the UNHCR delivering 40 metric tons of supplies to support 16,000 people. China provided emergency aid worth 1 billion yuan, and India established a telemedicine center offering 24/7 remote support. The National Unity Government provided 559.9 million MMK in assistance, while the UN launched an appeal for \$16 million to assist 1.2 million people in need. (Sources: UN Meeting Coverage ; X Post by @manishindiatv ; Mizzima News)

Key Impacts:

- **Humanitarian Toll:** The earthquake resulted in over 3,600 deaths and more than 5,000 injuries. Millions of people are in urgent need of emergency assistance. Morgues overflowed, and basic resources became scarce as the region grapples with the aftermath of the disaster. (Sources: Aljazeera ; The Irrawady)
- **Infrastructure Damage:** The earthquake caused major damage to hospitals and government buildings, leaving many areas without access to essential services. Power and water outages affected large portions of the country, with residents resorting to sleeping outdoors due to fears of aftershocks. (Source: Reuters)
- **Economic Consequences:** The economic recovery in Myanmar has been severely threatened by the new 44% US tariffs imposed on the garment industry, a key sector that employs over 500,000 people, predominantly women. The earthquake has compounded the country's existing crises, including ongoing civil war and widespread poverty, further hampering recovery efforts. (Source: The Irrawady)
- **Political Context:** The earthquake occurred amid ongoing civil conflict in Myanmar, raising questions among international observers about whether the disaster could lead to political change. The situation has drawn comparisons to the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, which also brought attention to the country's political challenges. (Sources: The Diplomat ; Aljazeera)
- **International Response:** International assistance has been flowing into Myanmar, with the UN and several countries providing humanitarian aid. ASEAN has engaged diplomatically through Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, though there are concerns over the military blocking aid from reaching certain regions. (Sources: UN Meeting Coverage, Myanmar Now ; Aljazeera)

International Aid and Diplomatic Response

- The Indian Medical Contingent, led by Major Varchasava, successfully established a Telemedicine Centre in Myanmar after setting up a proper hospital with the 50th Parachute Brigade. Using a long-range radio link and a satellite terminal grid, they enabled 24/7 remote medical support from doctors at R&R Hospital in Delhi. This marked the beginning of real-time medical consultations between Myanmar and India. (X Post by @manishindiatv)

- In Myanmar, a UNHCR-chartered plane carrying 40 metric tons of life-saving aid landed in Yangon on April 15, 2025. The supplies, which included tents and household items, were sent to support nearly 16,000 people affected by the recent earthquake. UNHCR has already distributed aid to 50,000 survivors in various regions, and the agency has appealed for \$16 million to assist 1.2 million people affected by the earthquake. (UN Meeting and Coverage Press Release)
- Malaysian Prime Minister and ASEAN chair Anwar Ibrahim announced that he would meet Myanmar's junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, in Bangkok to discuss earthquake relief efforts. The meeting, scheduled for Thursday, aimed to address the safety of Malaysian aid workers sent to assist after the March 28 earthquake, which killed over 3,600 people and left millions in need. ASEAN had previously barred Myanmar's junta officials from summits following the 2021 coup, but Anwar's decision to meet with Hlaing was focused on humanitarian concerns. (Myanmar Now)

Military Actions During Ceasefire

- Despite a declared ceasefire on April 2, 2025, intended to allow for earthquake relief efforts, Myanmar's military junta continued its offensive across the country. Between April 3 and 10, the junta launched multiple airstrikes and artillery attacks, particularly in the Sagaing and Mandalay regions. These assaults resulted in civilian casualties, including the deaths of over 30 people in Sagaing and Chin State, with airstrikes targeting schools, food courts, and residential areas (Sources: The Irrawady ; X Post by @NUGMyanmar).
- International pressure, including from Indian PM Narendra Modi, has failed to halt the junta's military actions, further complicating the already dire humanitarian situation in the country (Source: The Irrawady).
- On April 9, two additional airstrikes in Wuntho's Nan Khan village killed over 20 people, despite the temporary ceasefire. The junta's military actions have violated the ceasefire multiple times, continuing to target both civilians and resistance-held areas. These attacks followed ongoing resistance from ethnic armed groups like the Arakan Army and Kachin Independence Army, who have been fighting against the junta (Sources: X Post by @MyanmarWitness ; ACLED).

Military airstrikes in Myanmar

March 2025

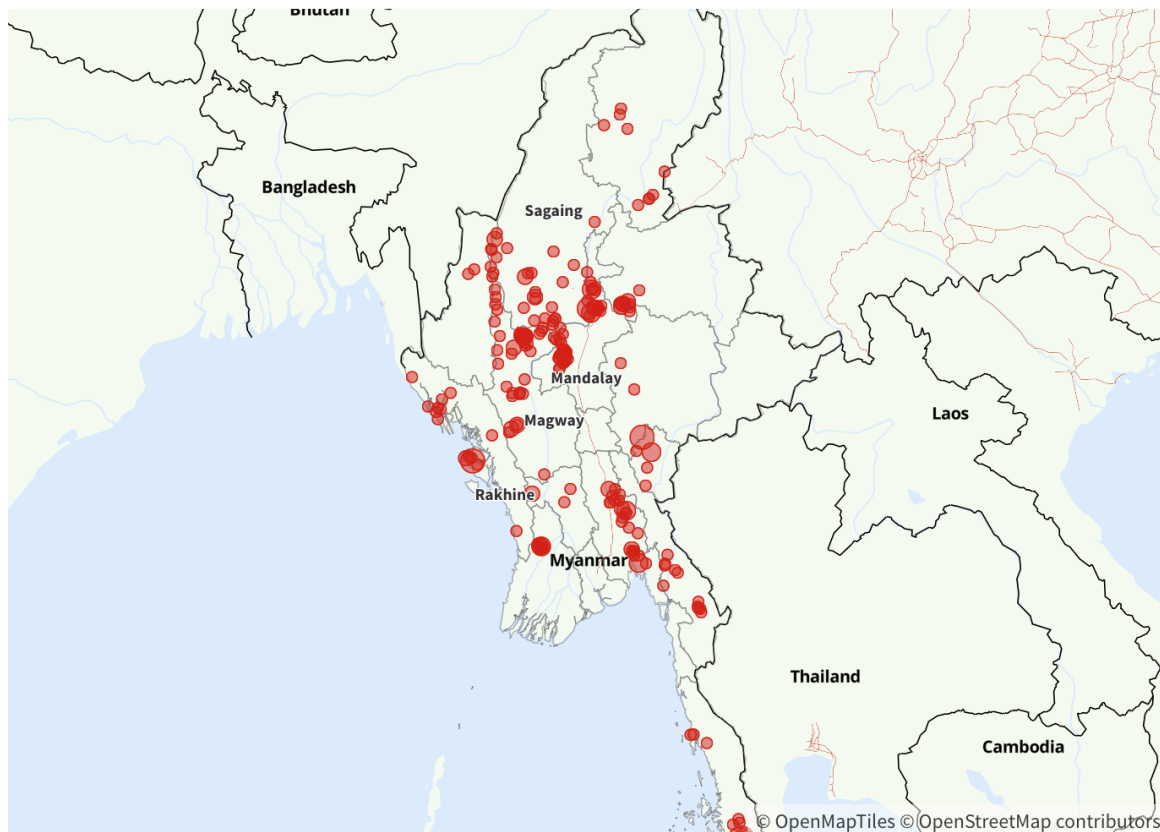
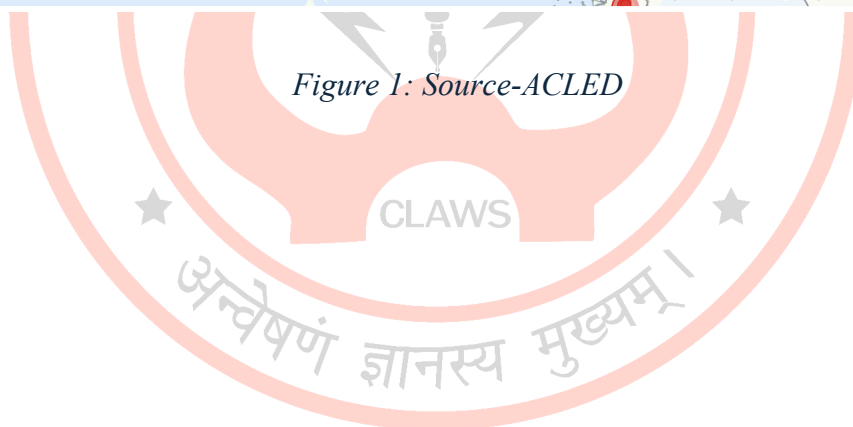


Figure 1: Source-ACLED



Political Developments

- Myanmar's military leader, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, made a rare international trip to Bangkok in April 2025 to attend the BIMSTEC summit, despite facing global sanctions and an ICC arrest warrant for alleged crimes against humanity. His visit came just days after a massive earthquake struck Myanmar, killing over 3,000 people. While in Bangkok, Min Aung Hlaing met with leaders including India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Thailand's PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra, discussing topics like infrastructure, disaster prevention, and crime. His participation in the summit drew strong criticism from Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government and activist groups, who argued it legitimized the junta and undermined BIMSTEC's credibility. (Aljazeera)
- On April 4, 2025, the Bangladeshi government announced that Myanmar had confirmed 180,000 Rohingya refugees were eligible to return to Myanmar. This followed talks in Bangkok between officials from both countries during the 6th BIMSTEC Summit. The confirmed names were part of a list of 800,000 submitted by Bangladesh between 2018 and 2020. Myanmar also agreed to expedite the verification of the remaining 550,000. However, many Rohingya refugees expressed skepticism, demanding full repatriation with citizenship and rights, stating that partial approval felt like a superficial gesture. (Aljazeera)

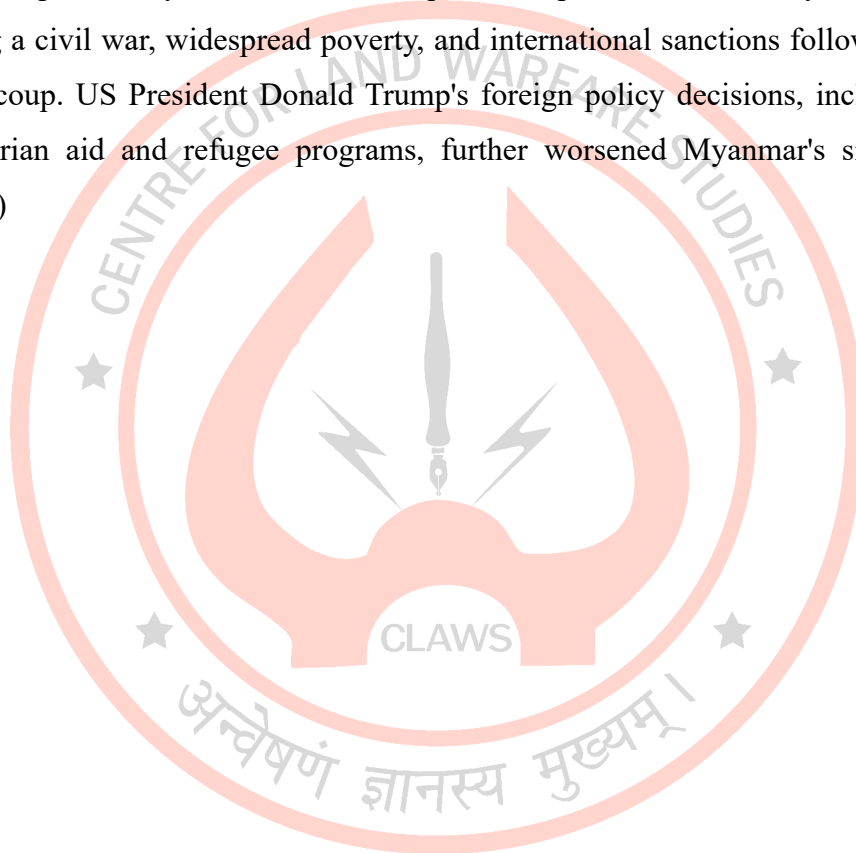
Ethnic Conflicts and Territorial Control

- On April 9, 2025, the Arakan Army (AA) issued an ultimatum to Rohingya residents in three villages of the U Kyi Chaek village group in northern Maungdaw, Rakhine State, ordering them to vacate their homes by April 15. This decision followed a meeting where AA imposed new restrictions, including a night curfew, a ban on ties to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), and mandatory travel permits. Villagers were also instructed to provide materials for construction. The threat of forced eviction has caused fear and uncertainty among the already vulnerable community, with human rights observers condemning the action as a violation of international humanitarian law. (Rohingya Khobor)
- The ethnic Chin Brotherhood alliance successfully took full control of the strategic town of Falam in Chin State on Monday after a five-month siege. The last junta position, Infantry Battalion 268, was defeated, cutting off the overland route between Kale and Hakha. The alliance, comprising several Chin resistance groups, had launched Operation Chin Brotherhood in November 2024, targeting Mindat and Falam. By December, they had

seized most of both towns and fully captured Mindat by December 22. Prior to Falam, the alliance had also taken control of Kanpetlet and Matupi. (The Irrawady)

Economic Impact

- In April 2025, Myanmar's garment manufacturers warned that new US tariffs, set at 44%, threatened to derail the country's recovery from a deadly earthquake that had killed 3,645 people and injured over 5,000. The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association expressed deep concern over the impact of the tariffs on an industry employing over 500,000 people, mostly women. The earthquake compounded the country's existing crises, including a civil war, widespread poverty, and international sanctions following the 2021 military coup. US President Donald Trump's foreign policy decisions, including cuts to humanitarian aid and refugee programs, further worsened Myanmar's situation. (The Irrawady)



About the Author

Anjali Manhas is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), where she specializes in Defence and Strategic Studies with a focus on South Asian geopolitics. She completed her Master's in Defence and Strategic Studies from Rashtriya Raksha University, where she developed a strong foundation in security, international relations, and strategic analysis. Anjali's current research centers on Bangladesh, examining its security dynamics, regional relationships, and strategic posture in South Asia. Her work aims to contribute to policy development and strategic insights for enhancing regional stability and security. With a keen interest in defence and strategic affairs, Anjali is committed to advancing knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of South Asian security issues.



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