

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Anjali Manhas

Political Developments

1. On August 1, 2025, the Myanmar junta declared a new state of emergency and imposed martial law on 63 townships, largely areas controlled by anti-junta forces across multiple states including Kachin, Karenni, Rakhine, Shan, and others. The junta also enacted harsh penalties against “sabotage or disruption” of the upcoming elections and criminalized some internet activities under a new cybersecurity law to quell dissent ahead of elections planned for December 2025 - January 2026. These moves are seen as strategies to maintain military control under a façade of civilian rule. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
2. On July 31, 2025, Myanmar's military formally handed over authority to a civilian-led interim government in anticipation of elections, but military leader Min Aung Hlaing retained full power as acting president, underscoring that the shift is superficial and power remains with the military. The state of emergency was officially ended. [Reuters, 2025-07-31](#)
3. The new "Law on the Prevention of Disruption and Interference with Elections" was introduced, imposing severe penalties including death for anti-election acts, underscoring the junta's repression of opposition and civil rights. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
4. The caretaker government formed by the junta clashes with ongoing ethnic resistance and the legitimate interim government, with international actors largely refusing to recognize the military's electoral process or reforms. [Reuters, 2025-07-31](#)

Foreign Affairs

1. Myanmar's transition and elections are widely criticized internationally as illegitimate, with calls from global and regional stakeholders to support democratic forces and avoid legitimizing the junta regime. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
2. Japan announced recruitment plans targeting Myanmar workers amidst continuing labor shortages, reflecting bilateral socio-economic ties despite political turmoil. [Global New Light of Myanmar, 2025-08-14](#)
3. ASEAN and international organizations remain engaged in discussions but struggle with the junta's refusal to cede effective power or hold credible elections. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
4. Efforts for the repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh have not progressed amid ongoing insecurity and lack of guarantees for safe return or citizenship rights. [CFR Rohingya Overview, 2024-08-22](#)

5. The foreign ministers of China, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand held an informal quadrilateral meeting in Anning, Yunnan Province, China. They collectively pledged to help maintain Myanmar's stability and jointly combat cross-border crimes such as online gambling, telecom fraud, drug and arms trafficking, and human trafficking. China emphasized a "Myanmar-led, Myanmar-owned" political process resolving differences through dialogue, supported ASEAN's mediation role, and stressed prioritizing livelihoods and post-earthquake reconstruction. Myanmar reiterated its commitment to peace and reconciliation and election preparations. Thailand and Laos expressed support for Myanmar's political process under a non-interference principle. [Xinhua, 2025-08-15](#)
6. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Myanmar's Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Than Swe in Anning on the sidelines of the 10th Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Wang highlighted the 75th anniversary of China-Myanmar diplomatic ties, emphasizing deepening bilateral relations, supporting Myanmar's sovereignty, political processes, and post-disaster reconstruction. Myanmar expressed its support for China's global initiatives and affirmed commitment to holding credible elections by year-end. China pressed for safety of its personnel and projects in Myanmar and cooperation on border security. [Chinese MFA, 2025-08-14](#)
7. Myanmar's Foreign Minister U Than Swe held bilateral talks with Cambodia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn in Phnom Penh. The talks focused on enhancing bilateral relations and cooperation despite Myanmar's internal challenges. [Cambodia MFA, 2025-08-15](#)
8. Thailand's Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa chaired an informal consultation with China, Laos, and Myanmar's foreign ministers in Anning. Thailand reaffirmed willingness to support Myanmar's elections based on ASEAN principles of non-interference and regional stability. The ministers agreed to deepen cooperation on joint law enforcement and fight cross-border criminal activities affecting Myanmar and its neighbors. [Thailand MFA, 2025-08-15](#)
9. Myanmar's Chargé d'Affaires a.i. in Manila attended a diplomatic reception commemorating the 58th anniversary of ASEAN's founding. The event, hosted by the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, emphasized ASEAN's theme of "Inclusivity and Sustainability," highlighting Myanmar's diplomatic participation despite internal political challenges. [Myanmar MFA, 2025-08-11](#)
10. Myanmar's Consul-General in Chengdu, China, and Ambassador to Thailand conducted diplomatic engagements reinforcing bilateral ties, regional cooperation, and support for

Myanmar's election preparations and internal stability efforts. [Myanmar MFA, 2025-08-15](#)

11. Myanmar Foreign Minister U Than Swe returned to Nay Pyi Taw after participating in the Anning meetings, reflecting continued engagement with neighbouring countries and China to maintain diplomatic ties and regional cooperation despite Myanmar's internal crises. [Global New Light of Myanmar, 2025-08-16](#)

Border Security

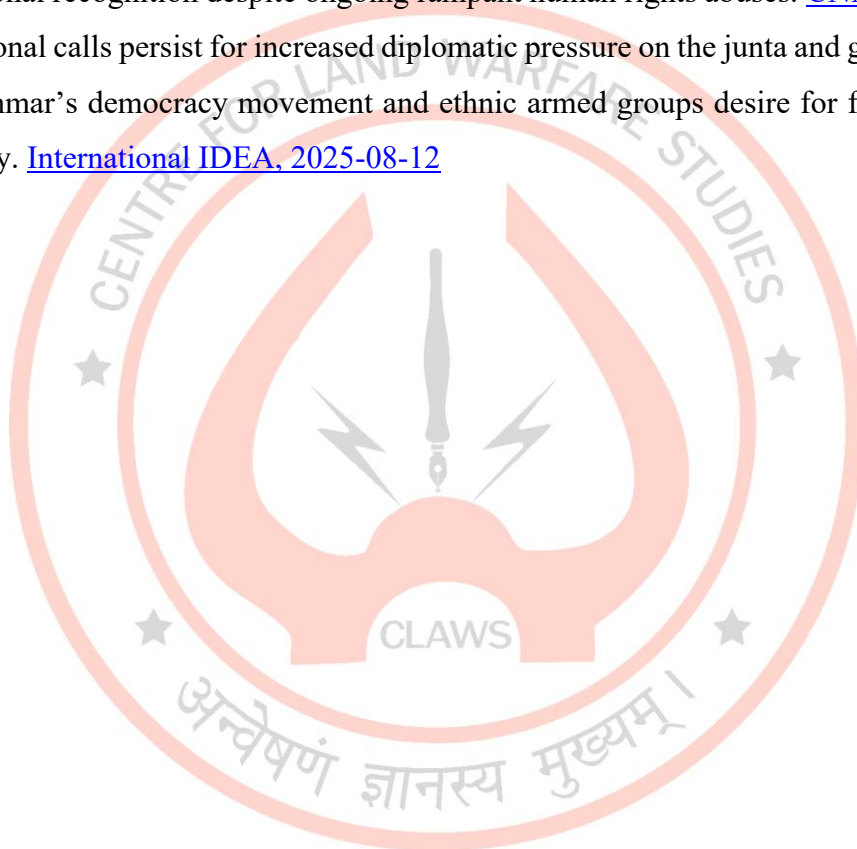
1. Martial law and emergency rule were extended particularly in border regions inhabited by ethnic armed groups to suppress mounting resistance and control porous frontiers. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
2. Border clashes between Myanmar forces and ethnic armed organizations, including in Kachin and Shan states, intensified during early August with ongoing military offensives and civilian displacements. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
3. The junta's military deployments and martial law declarations in border localities aim to control insurgencies but exacerbate local insecurity. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)

Defence Updates

1. The caretaker government formed in late July does not diminish the Tatmadaw's control over defence and security operations, with Min Aung Hlaing as commander-in-chief still holding key power. [Reuters, 2025-07-31](#)
2. The junta has banned many forms of dissent through election laws supported by punitive measures including the death penalty for sabotage. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
3. Armed groups opposing the junta continue to claim territory in northern and eastern Myanmar, escalating military confrontations amid the junta's election preparations. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
4. UN reports indicate continued use of child soldiers, torture of detainees, extrajudicial killings, and attacks on civilian infrastructure by military forces. [CNN, 2025-08-16](#)

Other Important National Security Matters

1. The military junta's newly imposed cybersecurity law criminalizes VPN use and bans social media sites to increase digital surveillance and clamp down on dissent. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)
2. Humanitarian aid is being intermittently provided to vulnerable populations although access remains tightly controlled by military officials. [Global New Light of Myanmar, 2025-08-14](#)
3. The junta's rebranding efforts ahead of elections are seen as cosmetic, aiming to secure international recognition despite ongoing rampant human rights abuses. [CNN, 2025-08-16](#)
4. International calls persist for increased diplomatic pressure on the junta and greater support for Myanmar's democracy movement and ethnic armed groups desire for federalism and autonomy. [International IDEA, 2025-08-12](#)



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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