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**Security council**

**Issue: Addressing the ethnic conflict and human rights violations following the military coup in Myanmar**

**Geographic Context:**

Myanmar, situated in Southeast Asia, is a country with varied geography.to the West it shares borders with Bangladesh and India, China in the North, Laos to the east and Thailand to the southeast, and a coastline opening into the Bay of Bengal as well as the Andaman Sea towards the south. The geographical location of Myanmar positions it as a strategic location as it serves as a link between South and Southeast Asia, which provides easy access to major global shipping routes. This key geographical position has attracted the attention of neighbouring powers in Myanmar, notably China and India, as they vie for control in the Indian Ocean area. The landscape of Myanmar supports its trade, agriculture, and natural resources industries by containing valuable mineral deposits, energy reserves, and fertile land.   
  
The physical landscape of the country plays a significant role in the existing ethnic and social divides. The landscape of Myanmar includes a combination of thick forests, mountainous areas, and valleys formed by rivers. In the northern region, the Shan and Kachin highlands are prominent, with ethnic groups like the Shan, Kachin, and Karen owning significant land. The primary basin, home to the Irrawaddy River, is the core area of the majority Bamar people, who have traditionally been politically dominant. West from Myanmar is Rakhine state. This region is the cause of many intense conflicts, where Rohinga Muslims have suffered oppression which has resulted it in attracting global attention where urgent humanitarian issues have been committed.

The diverse ethnic groups living in this difficult terrain have played a role in the country's history of regional independence and tension between minority groups and the central government. The mountainous terrains have led to the development of unique identities and governance based on ethnicity in these regions due to the physical isolation. Ethnic armed factions have seized control of the country’s rugged landscape to resist central government forces, contributing to Myanmar’s protracted internal conflicts. This geography not only impacts national unity but also poses challenges to the Burmese military (Tatmadaw) in terms of governing and enforcing policies across the nation.

Myanmar's economic and social stability is made more difficult by its climate and environmental conditions. The high rate of rainfall and monsoons are beneficial[[1]](#footnote-1) for agriculture, however it increases the risks for natural disasters[[2]](#footnote-2), especially cyclones and floods. Myanmar’s economy is heavily reliant on their agriculture making it very vulnerable to climate related disruptions, which have the potential of being worsened by the poverty[[3]](#footnote-3) and tensions within the country. Understanding Myanmar's ethnic conflicts, political divisions, and strategic importance is heavily influenced by its geographic features, particularly in the wake of the 2021[[4]](#footnote-4) military coup, which has heightened the need for regional and international actors to stabilize the nation and safeguard their interests.

A map of the country

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**Historical Context:**

Myanmar's past has been influenced by periods of ethnic conflicts, colonial domination, and fights for autonomy, paving the way for the intricate political and social interactions seen today. The area has a long history of diverse ethnic groups, such as the Mon, Shan, Rakhine, and Bamar, competing for power in the region for centuries. Starting with the British conquest in the 19th century, the colonial period altered Myanmar's ethnic makeup significantly, deepening divisions and setting the stage for the country's current conflicts.

During British colonialism, Myanmar was included in British India[[5]](#footnote-5) and the British implemented policies that separated ethnic groups by controlling the hill tribes indirectly and the central plains, which were primarily inhabited by the Bamar people, directly. The British recruitment of minority groups like the Karen, Kachin, and Chin into the colonial army exacerbated ethnic tensions and widened the divide between these groups and the Bamar population. This strategy of "divide and conquer" escalated ethnic tensions and resulted in lasting interethnic hostilities that continued after independence.

After gaining independence in 1948, the Union of Burma was founded with a constitution that guaranteed self-governance to various ethnic areas. Nevertheless, internal tensions arose rapidly, with ethnic groups feeling sidelined and striving for increased self-governance or separation. The emergence of ethnic uprisings started causing instability in the nation, and the Bamar-dominated central government faced challenges in maintaining authority. Starting in 1962, a succession of military coups solidified the Tatmadaw's influence in Myanmar's politics, as the military portrayed itself as the protector of the country's unity and sovereignty, pushing away ethnic minorities even more.

The military's influence on the government worsened ethnic rivalries by implementing policies that marginalized minority rights and favored Bamar-centric nationalism. In 1988, the military brutally crushed a pro-democracy movement, resulting in the formation of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which imposed strict control over freedoms and suppressed opposition. Ethnic minority areas still experienced lack of development and military suppression, with reports of human rights violations such as forced labor, land seizures, and destruction of villages in ethnic regions. In 2011, an extended period of military rule was finally replaced by a partially civilian government. The NLD under Aung San Suu Kyi achieved a significant victory in 2015, leading to a short period of political liberalization.

Even after the changeover, ethnic tensions persisted because numerous minority communities believed that the new administration failed to sufficiently meet their requests for self-governance and entitlements. The prolonged history of ethnic and political marginalization led to the 2021 military coup, undoing the small democratic advancements and reigniting deep-rooted grievances within Myanmar's ethnic groups. The political landscape has been destabilized by the coup and has also stirred up lingering ethnic tensions, putting the nation's stability and security at risk.

**Why This Issue is an Issue?**

The military coup in Myanmar in 2021 caused a significant humanitarian and political crisis which led to Myanmar's delicate progression towards democracy being severely disrupted by the military's aggressive seizure, triggering widespread criticism from the global community. This coup undid 10 years of progress from democratic leadership, as well as intensifying ethnic conflicts and human rights violations. The central government has targeted ethnic minorities who now face discrimination and neglect. This has been intensified by the military coup which has led to protests and armed resistance from different ethnic armed groups.

The overthrow signifies a major hindrance for human rights and democratic liberties. Ever since coming into power, the military has committed organized violations of human rights against non-combatants, such as random shootings, unjust detentions, torture, and quashing of peaceful demonstrations. Reports suggest that more than 1,500 civilians have lost their lives, while thousands have been either arrested or forced to flee because of military actions. Regions with ethnic minorities are the most affected by these activities, as the military has [[6]](#footnote-6)increased its operations in places such as Karen, Kachin, and Shan states, where ethnic armed groups have opposed the military government.

Accusations have been made that Myanmar's military is utilizing the coup to strengthen its authority over resources in ethnic minority regions, resulting in increased instances of misconduct. The military in Myanmar has a long history of taking advantage of the country's natural resources like jade, timber, and minerals, even with the new regime after the coup, often to the detriment of local communities. The exploitation contributes to a pattern of violence, causing ethnic armed factions to increase their opposition in order to defend their lands and wealth, resulting in a tangled network of conflicts at both the local and national levels.

The problem also has important consequences for regional stability and global security. Many refugees have been fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Bangladesh due to the increase in humanitarian crisis. The overflow impact of Myanmar's crisis may disrupt nearby nations and add pressure on regional humanitarian aid. Moreover, the coup's aftermath has resulted in a power vacuum, opening opportunities for foreign entities to get involved and potentially creating complications in Myanmar's geopolitical scene. Addressing the conflict in Myanmar is key to maintain regional security, preserve human rights, and support democratic principles in Southeast Asia.

**Nature of Ethnic Conflict and Human Rights Violations:**

The ethnic tensions in Myanmar stem from an intricate past of political alienation, economic marginalization, and social prejudice. The military's control over the country's political system has sustained a type of ethnic majority rule that marginalizes ethnic minorities, making them susceptible to widespread human rights violations. Ethnic armed groups like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and the Arakan Army (AA) have been striving for independence or self-governance for many years due to the government's neglect of their communities' economic and social issues.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The situation worsened as the Tatmadaw intensified their military presence in ethnic areas to quell resistance, fueling existing conflicts. Reports imply that the military has increased their harsh tactics in these regions and have destroyed villages, forcibly displaced people and carried out targeted assassinations.

The Karen, Kachin, Shan, and Mon have suffered similar treatments from the military and government. The military’s offensives have caused many ethnic groups to be displaced, either seeking shelter in forests or fleeing to neighboring nations. Human rights groups have recorded incidents of compulsory work, confiscation of land, and unlawful killings, highlighting the scale of violations targeting minority ethnic groups. The Tatmadaw have complicated the issue further by making enlistment mandatory and recruiting child soldiers in the areas of conflict.

The continuous cycle of violence targeting ethnic minorities in Myanmar is causing considerable doubts about the country's dedication to achieving peace and reconciliation. The military's behavior has diminished confidence in national organizations, as minority groups now see the Tatmadaw not as a uniting entity but as a tool of suppression.

These violations not only fuel resentment among ethnic communities but also strengthen the resolve of EAOs, making it difficult to negotiate lasting peace. The international community faces the challenge of addressing these abuses while respecting Myanmar[[8]](#footnote-8)’s sovereignty, balancing diplomatic pressure with support for ethnic rights and autonomy.

### Explanation of the Coup:

Myanmar's ethnic tensions stem from a complicated past of political marginalization, economic exclusion, and social prejudice. The military's control of the country's politics has continued a type of ethnic majority rule that excludes ethnic minorities, exposing them to ongoing human rights violations. Ethnic armed groups (EAGs), like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karen National Union (KNU), and Arakan Army (AA), have been battling for autonomy or self-governance for many years, pointing towards the government's neglect of their communities' economic and social necessities.

The political scene in Myanmar saw a significant change with the 2021 military coup, which undid ten years of democratic progress and returned the country to authoritarian leadership. On February 1, 2021, the Tatmadaw, under the leadership of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, arrested chosen representatives of the National League for Democracy (NLD), such as State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. The power seizure occurred following the NLD's overwhelming win in the November 2020 elections, which the Tatmadaw alleged were tainted by voter fraud. Nonetheless, foreign monitors did not discover any signs of extensive misconduct, calling into question the military's reason for the coup.

The Tatmadaw taking control shows their enduring hold on Myanmar's political system. The military took power in 1962, and continuously holds significant influence, arguing it is necessary to maintain unity and stability. In 2011, [[9]](#footnote-9)as Myanmar moved towards semi-civilian rule, the Tatmadaw was able to obtain 25% of parliamentary seats for military appointees and maintain authority over important ministries such as Defense and Home Affairs. In Myanmar's 2008 Constitution, which was created by the military, the Tatmadaw protected its interests and restricted civilian supervision effectively.

The Tatmadaw's fear of losing power played a significant role in driving the 2021 coup. The military's dominant control was put at risk by the NLD's significant victory in the election, as more people favoured additional democratic changes to limit military influence. Moreover, there were rumours going around that Aung San Suu Kyi and her party planned to modify the Constitution in order to decrease the military's representation in parliament. The Tatmadaw's coup was a proactive action to safeguard its institutional power and financial benefits.

The military's economic interests also had a significant impact. The Myanmar military holds a significant amount of influence over the country's economy, especially in profitable areas such as jade, timber, telecommunications, and construction. Two major Myanmar conglomerates, the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) and the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC)[[10]](#footnote-10), are used by the military as it brings in a significant [[11]](#footnote-11)amount of profits. The financial interests were at risk due to civilian oversight or democratic reforms, prompting the Tatmadaw to prevent any increase in civilian control.

### The aftermath of the coup has been characterized by extensive civilian demonstrations and a violent military reaction. At first, there were peaceful protests in various cities and towns throughout the country, organized by civil servants, students, and activists. Nevertheless, the Tatmadaw's forceful suppression of these demonstrations heightened tensions, resulting in numerous deaths, numerous incarcerations, and numerous injuries. With the increase in opposition, a larger movement advocating civil disobedience developed, leading to the establishment of new resistance organizations such as the People's Defense Force (PDF), known for engaging in guerrilla tactics against the military.

### The coup has faced strong international criticism, leading to sanctions being imposed on Myanmar's military leaders and military-owned businesses by countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. ASEAN has had increasing difficulties in dealing with this issue due to their non-interference policy. Even though ASEAN put forward a plan called the "Five-Point Consensus" to resolve the conflict, the military has mostly disregarded these conditions, resulting in criticism of ASEAN's effectiveness.

### The coup highlights the military's resolve to maintain control regardless of consequences. The military's focus on stability is evident in its harsh crackdown on dissent and reluctance to engage with civilian opposition. The international community has found it increasingly difficult to balance sovereignty and while addressing human rights abuse and restoring democracy.

### Competing Interests, Strategies, and Motivations:

The situation in Myanmar entails an intricate interaction of interests, strategies, and motivations among local, regional, and global players. The main focus of the Tatmadaw is on preserving its political control, economic benefits, and institutional authority. The military in Myanmar defends its actions by explaining the importance of national unity and security, presenting the coup as a key step to maintain stability. The Tatmadaw's strong grip on Myanmar's economy, coupled with its enduring participation in politics, prevents it from being easily swayed by any changes that would reduce its power.

Ethnic armed groups (EAGs) are another important local interest. Organizations like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karen National Union (KNU), and the Arakan Army (AA) are in conflict for increased autonomy, control of resources, and political acknowledgment. After the military takeover, certain Ethnic Armed Organizations have joined forces against the coup, while others have chosen to proceed cautiously, focusing on local independence rather than direct opposition due to concerns about the military's harsh tactics. The groups' long-held grievances have been amplified by the coup, and their tactics demonstrate a combination of seizing opportunities and ensuring their survival by protecting their lands and assisting nearby communities.

Regionally, neighboring countries of Myanmar, specifically China and India, have unique strategic concerns. China has made substantial investments in Myanmar's infrastructure, including projects like the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, as they share an extensive border. China sees stability in Myanmar as essential to protect its economic interests, particularly the vital pipelines transferring oil and natural gas from the Bay of Bengal to Yunnan Province. China has taken a careful approach to the coup, supporting a diplomatic solution and emphasizing stability over democratic rule.

India is intrigued by Myanmar and the prospect of security and economic integration. India is worried about the possibility of an uptick in refugee numbers, especially in northeastern states that share ethnic connections with Myanmar's populations. Moreover, Myanmar plays a crucial role in India's "Act East" policy that focuses on boosting connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia. New Delhi has chosen a middle-of-the-road stance, criticizing the violence but also preserving diplomatic relations with the military to safeguard its strategic and economic concerns.

On a global scale, the United States and the European Union have strongly opposed the coup, implementing specific sanctions on military officials and businesses linked to the military. Both actors stress the significance of democracy and human rights, in line with their wider foreign policy goals in Southeast Asia. Yet, the effectiveness of these penalties is restricted as Myanmar's economy shows some resilience, thanks to its trade connections with nearby nations, especially China. Therefore, Western tactics prioritize diplomatically isolating the Tatmadaw while also backing humanitarian endeavors[[12]](#footnote-12).

### ASEAN, being the regional group to which Myanmar belongs, encounters conflicting motivations. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have advocated for a stronger reaction, which includes involving Myanmar's opposing side. On the other hand, nations such as Thailand and Cambodia, which have stronger military connections to Myanmar, opt for a careful strategy, highlighting the importance of non-interference. The compromise seen in the "Five-Point Consensus"[[13]](#footnote-13) from ASEAN shows its enforcement capability is limited as the Tatmadaw has ignored the agreement.

### These conflicting interests make it difficult to take unified action. The Tatmadaw can resist certain international pressure due to its economic relationships with China and neighboring trade partners, while EAOs adapt their strategies based on local priorities. The various reasons behind external actors' involvement highlight the challenge of establishing a cohesive strategy to tackle the crisis in Myanmar.

### Data:

### Statistical data shows the serious nature of the crisis in Myanmar. Recent reports indicate that more than 1,500 civilians have lost their lives and around 12,000 individuals have been captured by the Tatmadaw since the coup. Humanitarian groups approximate that about 300,000 individuals have been forced to leave their homes within their own country because of increasing violence, especially in regions of ethnic minorities where military actions have heightened. In Rakhine State, around 600,000 Rohingya Muslims are still present, with about 130,000 living in internment camps described as "open-air prisons."

### Information from the United Nations shows that almost 3 million individuals require immediate humanitarian aid, with a significant number experiencing extreme food insecurity as a result of conflict-related disturbances in farming and commerce. In major cities like Yangon and Mandalay, the military's actions have resulted in strict controls on people's movement, reducing their ability to reach basic services and worsening poverty. Reports show a significant rise in forced labor and child recruitment, especially in regions with presence of ethnic armed groups and PDF forces.

### According to the World Bank[[14]](#footnote-14), Myanmar will experience a significant economic downturn, with GDP being predicted to decrease by 18% in 2021. Foreign investment has decreased, while inflation has increased, affecting the costs of essential items and exacerbating the standard of living for many civilians. The economy of Myanmar has become more isolated and poverty has increased due to international sanctions and the restrictive policies of the Tatmadaw.

### These numbers highlight the gravity of the crisis and the obstacles to Myanmar’s political stability. The information underscores the pressing requirement for a thorough reaction that tackles both the immediate humanitarian needs and the root political and social causes of the conflict.

### Impact on Civilian Populations:

The military takeover in Myanmar has caused a severe humanitarian crisis, greatly affecting the civilian population. The military has caused thousands of civilian casualties through harshly suppressing peaceful protests, leading to numerous injuries and detentions. There are widespread reports of torture[[15]](#footnote-15), extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances, especially directed towards activists, journalists, and ethnic minority members. These actions have created a climate of terror and oppression, causing numerous civilians to either escape their residences or find safety in nearby nations.

Ethnic minorities in areas of conflict experience a greater impact compared to other groups. Military campaigns in regions such as Karen, Shan, and Kachin have resulted in widespread displacement, causing complete destruction to villages. Displaced communities often lack adequate access to sufficient food, shelter, and healthcare, leading to increased rates of malnutrition and illness. The access to education for children has been disrupted by military forces utilizing schools as bases, infringing upon their right to education and exposing them to the risk of forced recruitment.

The coup has exacerbated the plight of civilians by also affecting the economy. The economy is now influenced by the military and job losses have proliferated due to the enforcement of martial law, particularly affecting urban areas with collapsed manufacturing and service industries. Escalating inflation has driven the prices of essential items such as food, fuel, and medicine to be unaffordable for many families. The economic difficulties intensify as the Tatmadaw seizes assets from civilians suspected of supporting the opposition, culminating in heightened poverty and vulnerability.

International humanitarian organizations encounter significant obstacles in delivering aid, as the military limits access to conflict zones and imposes bureaucratic hurdles. The Tatmadaw has also been accused of hindering aid meant for ethnic minorities, manipulating humanitarian assistance as a means of asserting control. These circumstances have led to a critical humanitarian crisis, with millions requiring immediate support and no evident resolution to the situation in sight.

**Relevant Past UN Resolutions and Reports:**

### The situation regarding human rights violations in Myanmar has been consistently spotlighted by the United Nations through various resolutions. Resolution 75/287, adopted by the General Assembly in 2021, called for the immediate cessation of violence and the release of political prisoners. The UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, established in 2017, collected evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Tatmadaw, especially against the Rohingya.

### In addition, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [[16]](#footnote-16)is currently investigating Myanmar for alleged genocide against the Rohingya, following a case brought by The Gambia in 2019. The UN Security Council issued statements advocating for moderation and respect for human rights, but has faced difficulties in enacting binding resolutions caused by an opposition from China and Russia. Furthermore the Security Council resolution 2669 expressed deep concern for the state of emergency of Myanmar and called for the cessation of any and all forms of violence in the country. This resolution submitted on December 21st 2022 also called for the liberation of all arbitrarily detained prisoners including leaders such as Win Myint and Aung San Suu Kyi.

### Focus of Debate:

The discussion will centre on holding individuals responsible for human rights abuses, dealing with the emergency situation, and considering ways to transition to a more democratic system. Important questions to consider are the impact of sanctions, assistance for ASEAN's mediation attempts, and actions to safeguard at-risk populations. The Security Council will also talk about ways to increase humanitarian access and enhance accountability mechanisms.

**Block Positions:**

**United States:**  
The United States firmly contests Myanmar's military coup and has enacted sanctions aimed at Myanmar's military officials and military-operated enterprises. Washington promotes a restoration of democracy, endorses ASEAN-led mediation, and emphasizes the importance of safeguarding human rights for the citizens of Myanmar. The U. S. additionally partners with global allies to exert pressure on the junta while offering humanitarian assistance to aid refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). [[17]](#footnote-17)

**United Kingdom:**

The UK firmly opposes Myanmar’s military takeover, backing international sanctions and giving priority to humanitarian assistance. London highlights the necessity of democracy and rule of law in Myanmar and closely aligns with the U. S. on regional policies. The UK also promotes strong backing for ASEAN’s diplomatic initiatives and urges accountability for the junta’s human rights violations against civilians and minority groups. [[18]](#footnote-18)

**France:**

France denounces Myanmar’s military government and aligns with the European Union’s coordinated restrictions on Myanmar. Paris stresses backing for ASEAN-led initiatives and offers humanitarian aid to impacted populations, notably those forced to flee due to violence. France adopts a diplomatic stance, calling for global solidarity and underscoring the necessity for justice concerning Myanmar’s human rights violations, particularly those targeting ethnic minorities and peaceful protestors.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**China:**

China prioritizes stability in Myanmar, focusing on non-interference and encouraging all parties to peacefully address their issues. Beijing possesses economic and security interests linked to Myanmar, including the Belt and Road Initiative. Although avoiding direct sanctions, China stresses the importance of dialogue and regional stability, concerned about possible refugee influxes across its borders and disruptions to its essential infrastructure projects in Myanmar.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Russia:**

Russia is against international sanctions imposed on Myanmar, highlighting its sovereignty and the principle of non-interference. Moscow has sustained its strategic connections with Myanmar's military, supplying arms and defense assistance. Russia advocates for an internal resolution via dialogue and perceives Myanmar as a counterweight to Western dominance in the area. This position is consistent with Moscow’s wider geopolitical strategy of backing regimes that are opposed to Western pressures.[[21]](#footnote-21)

**Thailand:**

Thailand, which shares a border with Myanmar, experiences the immediate effects of refugee movement and economic turmoil resulting from Myanmar’s crisis. Bangkok emphasizes regional stability and has prudently interacted with the junta to ensure security at its border. While backing ASEAN's diplomatic initiatives, Thailand is wary of provoking Myanmar's military, striking a balance between humanitarian issues and national security interests.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**Bangladesh:**

Bangladesh continues to be greatly impacted by Myanmar’s ethnic strife, especially regarding the Rohingya refugee situation. With more than one million Rohingya refugees residing there, Dhaka calls for global assistance in creating a sustainable repatriation strategy and demands that Myanmar be held responsible for human rights abuses. Bangladesh pushes for efforts to be directed at the junta to address the crisis and works together with international organizations to handle the persistent refugee situation.[[23]](#footnote-23)

**India:**

India is worried about the security and economic impacts of Myanmar’s crisis, especially along its northeastern border. New Delhi takes a practical approach, keeping communication open with Myanmar’s military to guarantee border security and uphold its Act East policy interests. India backs humanitarian initiatives and carefully participates in ASEAN diplomacy, aiming for stability while protecting its economic and strategic interests. [[24]](#footnote-24)

**ASEAN:**

ASEAN aims for a peaceful resolution and has introduced a “Five-Point Consensus” urging the military to cease violence, participate in dialogue, and permit humanitarian assistance. However, ASEAN is constrained by its non-interference policy and faces difficulties with internal disagreements regarding the approach to Myanmar. In spite of these obstacles, ASEAN continues to be the main regional player advocating for stability and aiding humanitarian relief initiatives in Myanmar. [[25]](#footnote-25)

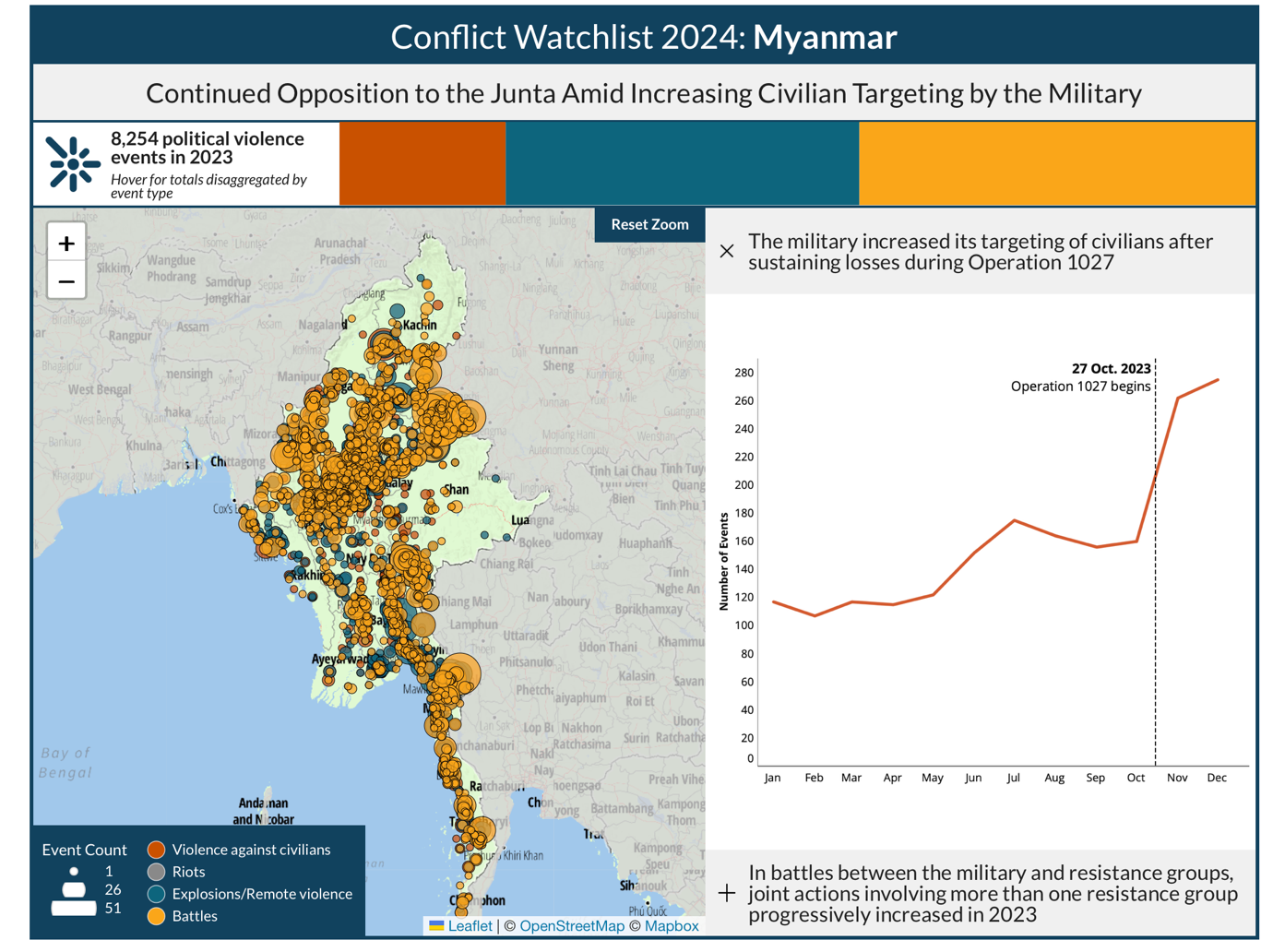
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**Further reading:**

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<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/07/1151966>

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