

# Exploiting Ethnic Conflicts in Attempt to Consolidate Military Control



Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica is a non-governmental research organization that continuously monitors political and societal change.

# Contents

Research Methodology.....	5
Summary .....	6
1. Discords Occurred among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Northern Shan.....	8
1.1 Discords Arisen among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Muse .....	9
1.2 Discords Ensued among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Kutkai.....	10
1.3. Discords Emanated between Ta’ang and Shan Revolutionary Organizations in Namkhan .....	11
1.4 Exploitation by the Junta .....	12
2. Discords in Paletwa Township, Chin .....	15
2.1 Exploitation by the Junta .....	17
3. Discords between the Arakan Army and Rohingyas .....	19
3.1 Exploitation by the Junta .....	21
4. Framing Burman-Buddhist Events to Escalate Tensions.....	23
4.1 Ethnic and Religious Tensions in Laukkaing, Northern Shan.....	23
4.2 Exploitation by the Junta .....	25
4.3. Tensions between Burmans and Arakaneses in Kyauktaw, Rakhine. ..	28
4.4 Exploitation by the Junta .....	30
5. Conclusion .....	32
References.....	34



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## | Research Methodology

The events reported in news media and the propaganda posted on pro-military telegram channels monitored by Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica are analyzed with qualitative research method. The analysis will focus on the actual events and the exploitation by the military on these events.

## | Summary

The Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) which comprises of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Arakan Army (AA), and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) launched assaults on junta bases and outposts in northern Shan on 27 October 2023, under the Operation 1027. It was found that the military, known to regularly ferment ethnic and religious conflicts in the past, accelerated disseminating hate speech and propaganda after Operation 1027 had contracted its controlled territories. Specifically, the junta and pro-military Telegram channels which promote its actions have intensified their dissemination of hate speech and propaganda materials with the intention of amplifying ethno-religious tensions in northern Shan and Rakhine.

As the 3BHA swiftly neutralized and captured territories in northern Shan, China was portrayed by pro-military telegram channels as being behind the Operation 1027. Moreover, the MNDAA's attacks were depicted as an invasion by a Chinese ethnic group into the territory of Shan people. Following the commencement of Operation 1027, narratives claiming that foreign groups such as the Chinese and their ethnic groups, were invading Shan territories and oppressing the native Shan people gained prominence in the hate speech and propaganda spread by the junta. Moreover, the junta was also found to be actively generating hostility by exploiting the existing tensions among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), including the MNDAA, TNLA, Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and (Shan State Progress Party (SSPP)/ Shan State Army (SSA). The junta also engendered antagonism between ethnic groups when the AA resumed its assaults on the military, capturing towns in Chin and Rakhine. Subsequently, the junta fomented discord between the AA and Chin people in Paletwa as well as spread disinformation which can cause the deterioration of inter-Chin relations. Similarly, pro-military telegram channels exacerbated existing ethnic and religious tensions and conflicts by portraying differences between northern and southern Rakhine and exploiting tensions between the Arakanese and other ethnic groups, particularly the Rohingyas. In order to incite conflicts

between Burmans and other ethnic groups, a narrative was propagated that ethnic revolutionary groups' attacks targeted Burman-Buddhist. According to junta propaganda, MNDAA was reported to have prohibited Burmans from entering Laukkaing in northern Shan, outlawing the usage of Myanmar currency, and destroying the property of Burmans in the town. Additionally, a video of a person wearing MNDAA uniform smashing a Buddhist pagoda with a sledgehammer was shared widely on social media. In the face of this adversity, the junta's propagandists promulgated the need for Burmans to stay united and encouraged counter actions such as taking revenge on Kokang people who had settled in Burman-dominated areas. Similarly, disinformation claiming that the AA massacred family members of the junta soldiers fleeing from a sinking military vessel was also spread. Concurrently, military supporters called for the campaign "to boycott Rakhine monti and other Arakanese delicacies", deliberately sowing the seed for Burman-Arakanese ethnic conflict. Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations were depicted as exploiting Burman-dominated People's Defense Forces (PDFs) and bent on destroying Buddhism due to their hatred for it. According to military propaganda, Burman-Buddhists were urged to knit together against their enemies as they were the primary target of Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations. Moreover, Buddhism-based propaganda campaign was initiated to preserve the nation, religion, and sovereignty. The loss of military outposts and territories due to the advancement of revolutionary forces was portrayed as having adverse effects on national security. By highlighting ultra-Burmese nationalism and centralization ideology, the military was portrayed as an institution dedicated to protecting the nation, religion, and sovereignty, appealing the populace to support its actions. Meanwhile, Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations were depicted as furthering their own interests rather than those of the nation. This portrayal denigrated the actions of Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations and entrenched the military's grip on power.

# 1. Discords Occurred among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Northern Shan





## 1.1 Discords Arisen among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Muse



### Seilant Village, Muse Township

7 November 2023

The TNLA arrested Sai Maung Aung, a secretary of Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) from Seilant village group in Muse township. According to the TNLA's announcement, Sai was arrested and interrogated for taking photos of the TNLA's military activities. However, a military engagement between the TNLA and the SSPP/SSA broke out while Sai was being interrogated. Casualties were reported on both sides during the engagement (BBC Burmese, 2023).

### Pang Hseng, Muse Township

11 February 2024

The MNDAA summoned locals of Pang Hseng (Kyu Koke) in Muse township to a meeting, asking them not to allow soldiers of the KIA and SSPP/SSA entering the town bearing firearms (Khwan Murng, 2024).

### Monekoe, Muse Township

February 2024

During Chinese New Year, MNDAA organized a festival at a Manaw field. The fair included a gambling station which led to heated argument between the MNDAA and Kachin locals.

### Monekoe, Muse Township

23 April 2024

The MNDAA ordered to stop the construction of an assembly hall of the Kachin Literature and Culture Committee on the Manaw field mentioned above although the committee had asked permission from the MNDAA for it. Additionally, the MNDAA also cordoned off the committee office. According to the KIA's spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu, tension arose between the two groups but was ultimately resolved through negotiation (DVB Burmese, 2024b).

### Monekoe, Muse Township

15 May 2024

The MNDAA asked the KIA to evacuate one of their frontier bases and it was later taken over by the MNDAA (The 74 Media, 2024).

## 1.2 Discords Ensued among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations in Kutkai

### Early December 2023

Frictions existed between the TNLA and the KIA at Namphatkar Village, Kutkai Township, before the capture of the village by the TNLA.

### 7 January 2024

The TNLA officers warned the MNDAA for establishing administrative functions by opening no less than five offices in Kutkai.

### 4 and 5 February 2024

The TNLA announced that a KIA column with approximately 50 personnel had entered Kutkai to commemorate Kachin Revolutionary Day ceremony, without informing them (VOA Burmese, 2024). The next day, the TNLA forces lowered Kachin national flags hoisted for the ceremony (The Irrawaddy, 2024).

### 10 and 12 April 2024

The TNLA forces came to a KIA public relations office in Kutkai and ordered the KIA personnel to leave the town by 15 April. The TNLA also vandalized the Kachin national flag in front of the office.

### 14 April 2024

The TNLA destroyed a signboard of a nature reserve between Muse and Kutkai, designated by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) (Kachin News Group, 2024). The KIA's spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu explained that the incident stemmed from disagreement between junior officials and the central committees of both organizations would negotiate to resolve the issue.



### 27 April 2024

A MNDAA column of 80 personnel ordered 5 TNLA personnel at Kaungkha Junction in Kutkai to leave and confiscated their weapons.

### 16 April 2024

The TNLA warned the KIA and MNDAA against operating in Kutkai. TNLA's spokesperson Lway Yay Oo announced that they had already held a talk involving all three organizations and peacefully resolved the issue (The Irrawaddy, 2024b).

### 29 April 2024

The MNDAA returned the confiscated weapons to the TNLA after a negotiation with them. The MNDAA also agreed to resolve future tension through dialogue (Shwe Phee Myay, 2024).

## 1.3. Discords Emanated between Ta'ang and Shan Revolutionary Organizations in Namkhan



### December 2023

Frictions and accusations arose between the TNLA and the SSPP/SSA within the township following MNDA's capture of Namkhan.

### 21 January 2024

The TNLA requested the SSPP with a formal letter to refrain from recruiting new personnel, practicing military and administrative activities, and levying taxes in Namkhan.

### April 2024

The SSPP personnel arrived at villages around Naungtaung Gate in Namkhan Township and started collecting taxes from villagers. The TNLA and the SSPP held talks to relocate SSPP personnel stationed at the gate by the end of April.

### 27 May 2024

The TNLA transported more than 100 SSPP personnel posted at the gate to a place near Muse.

### 2 June 2024

Although the TNLA said that the transfer took place following an agreement between the leaders of both organizations, the SSPP/SSA's spokesperson Sai Phong Han denied the existence of such agreement, explaining that although there were negotiations between two groups, these talks are not concluded yet (VOA Burmese, 2024b).

## 1.4 Exploitation by the Junta

By utilizing disputes among Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations, pro-military Telegram channels attempted to disseminate the junta's existing propaganda and generate ethnic conflicts. Tensions between the SSPP and the TNLA were exploited to portray the TNLA as an invader to Shan region and the military as protector of the region. According to the narrative created by the junta's propagandists, Shan people are more inclined to support Burmans due to existing ethnic tensions between Shan people and Ta'ang people. Additionally, they stressed that the military plays an important role in repelling Ta'ang's invasion. Pro-military Telegram channels also disseminate information which could intensify the hostility between ethnic groups, such as "TNLA is oppressing and murdering Shan people", "TNLA is deliberately fueling a war to destroy Hsipaw which is the seat of Shan Sawbwas, while Shan youth would retaliate by burning down Ta'ang regions such as Namhsan and Manton". Simultaneously, Shan Revolutionary Organizations were portrayed as "incapable of defending their territories and kinsmen", deliberately instilling in Shan people to retaliate against Ta'ang people.

Similarly, the MNDAA's military activities were also portrayed as the invasion of the Chinese and their ethnic groups into Myanmar's Shan region. In this propaganda, Kokang were painted as China-backed outsiders while Shan people were portrayed as natives to the region. The junta's loss of territories in northern Shan was exaggerated with the defeat being framed as if a foreign power were conquering Myanmar's territories and threatening the country's national security.

Pro-military Telegram channels argued that "Ethnic Armed Revolutionary Forces prioritized ethno-nationalism over federalism and democracy, and the war they triggered was merely to advance their own interest", thereby denigrating the actions of Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations. They also ventured to inflame ethnic tensions by arguing that an ethnic armed revolutionary group discouraged other ethnic people from settling in a city they occupied by practicing a heavy-handed policy. Furthermore, the group

was also said to be eroding other ethnic groups' cultures, values, and identities. Pro-military Telegram channels praised the military for governing all ethnic groups without any discrimination and pointed out that areas not under the control of the military were more prone to ethnic conflicts due to the existence of armed groups. However, military supporters ignored the fact that for decades, the military has denied ethnic groups' right to self-determination and forbidden them from managing their own affairs and shaping their own destiny, in order to preserve their power and balance.



## | 2. Discords in Paletwa Township, Chin

In November 2023, armed conflicts in Western Myanmar resumed when the AA began its assault on military bases in Paletwa, Chin. After declaring that Paletwa was now free of junta forces on 14 January 2024, friction emerged between the AA, on one hand, and Chin Revolutionary Organizations and Chin ethnic groups, on the other. Frictions were also observed between various Chin groups.



**14 January to February 2024**

Skirmish occurred between the joint forces of the Chin National Army (CNA), Chinland Defence Force – Mara (CDF Mara), and Maraland Defense Force (MDF) in Paletwa Township (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024a). News alleged that the AA fought along with the MDF in these battles.

**11 March 2024**

Pu Pa Thang, Prime Minister of Chinland Government<sup>1</sup>, criticized AA for instituting administrative arrangements and advised the AA to hold a negotiation with Chinland Council<sup>2</sup> (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024d).

**16 & 17 April 2024**

Chin media reported that the AA allowed people to travel in and out of Paletwa only if they presented the recommendation letters issued by them (Zalen, 2024).

**2 May 2024**

It was reported that in Mee Zar village, Paletwa Township, AA coerced locals in Paletwa to supply 1,000 bamboos per village for the construction of accommodations for more 1,000 Arakanese families who would come from Bangladesh to settle in Paletwa (Zalen, 2024b).

**17 May 2024**

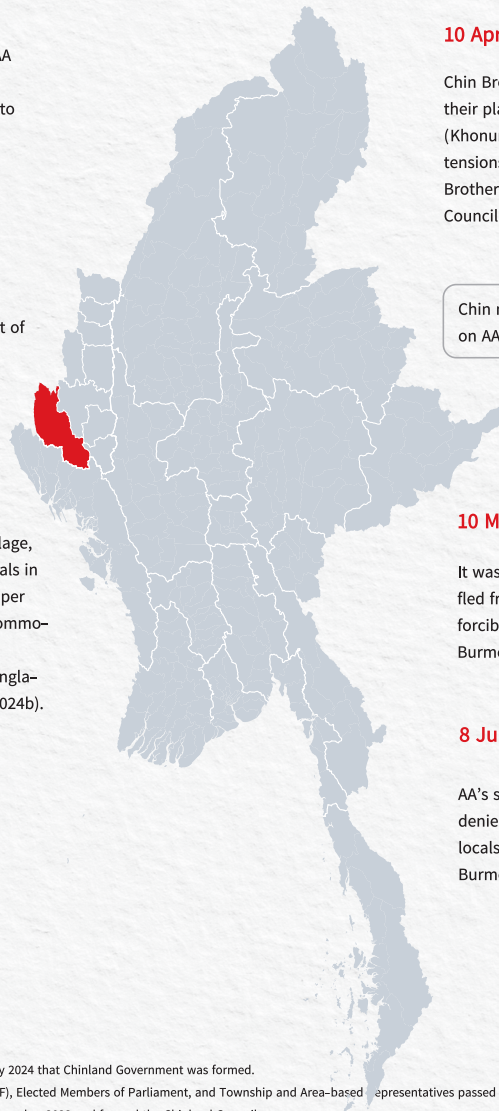
It was reported that the AA arrested nine locals from Paletwa (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024g).

**4 March 2024**

The AA's spokesperson Khaing Thu Kha denied the allegations that the AA was involved in the conflict between Chin revolutionary forces by providing military assistance (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024c). Moreover, he reiterated that the ownership of Paletwa remains in the hands of the locals and that the AA would strive to establish an all-inclusive administrative arrangement. Moreover, he pointed out to the continued existence of junta forces in Chin, and he exhorted Chin revolutionary forces to prioritize the liberation of the overall Chin region over Paletwa (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024b).

**10 April 2024**

Chin Brotherhood Forces made public their plan to cooperate with the AA (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024e). Also, tensions emerged between Chin Brotherhood Alliance<sup>3</sup> and Chinland Council.



Chin news agencies reported on AA's actions in Chin State.

**10 May 2024**

It was reported that the Chin people fled from Paletwa in fear of the AA's forcible recruitment (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024f).

**8 June 2024**

AA's spokesperson Khaing Thu Kha denied that AA forcefully conscripted locals from Paletwa (Khonumthung Burmese, 2024h).

1 Chinland Council declared on 1 February 2024 that Chinland Government was formed.  
 2 Delegates from Chin National Front (CNF), Elected Members of Parliament, and Township and Area-based representatives passed the Chinland Constitution at Chinland Council Convention on 6 December 2023 and formed the Chinland Council.  
 3 On 23 December 2023, Zomi Federal Union, Chin National Organization, and Chin National Council – Mindat declared the founding of Chin Brotherhood Alliance with the intention of coordinating civil and military activities. Maraland Territorial Council, Chin Defense Force – Kanpetlet, and Chinland Defense Force – Matupi later joined the Brotherhood.



## 2.1 Exploitation by the Junta

By capitalizing on tensions between the AA and Arakanese, on one hand, and Chin people, on the other, as well as on inter-Chin tensions, pro-military Telegram channels amplify existing ethnic tensions. Various accounts were concocted in which Chin people and their region suffered from oppression and exploitation by the AA. These accounts included anecdotes of Chin youth in Paletwa fleeing their homes due to the AA's mandatory conscription of young people into its ranks, and Chin Defense Force's (CDF) retaliatory response to this action was portrayed as the primary catalyst in rendering Paletwa into a battlefield. The AA was portrayed as responsible not only for bringing open warfare to Chin region but also for sowing division among various Chin groups and turning them against each other. Additionally, pro-military Telegram channels mentioned that Paletwa was suffering from warfare more than Rakhine due to the AA's military operation which intended to further Arakanese interests. Phrases such as "Paletwa is being used as a proxy battlefield", "Chin people were killed and wounded while Arakanese are reaping profit" were employed not only to describe the conflict in Paletwa but also to turn one group against the other by comparing two ethnic groups. Chin revolutionary forces were blamed "for their inability to defend their own land". This criticism also aimed to elicit their retaliatory reaction to the AA. Meanwhile, the AA was portrayed as also bent on "putting Mindat and Kanpetlet under its control and expanding its dominion within Chin region". Moreover, these channels also intentionally disseminated rumors, stating that AA forced Khumi women to marry incapacitated AA combatants.



### 3. Discords between the Arakan Army and Rohingyas



### February 2024

The junta composed a list of Rohingyas youth in Kyautalone refugee camp in Kyaukphyu township as well as Thandwe, Sittwe, and Buthidaung townships, and forcibly recruited them for military training.

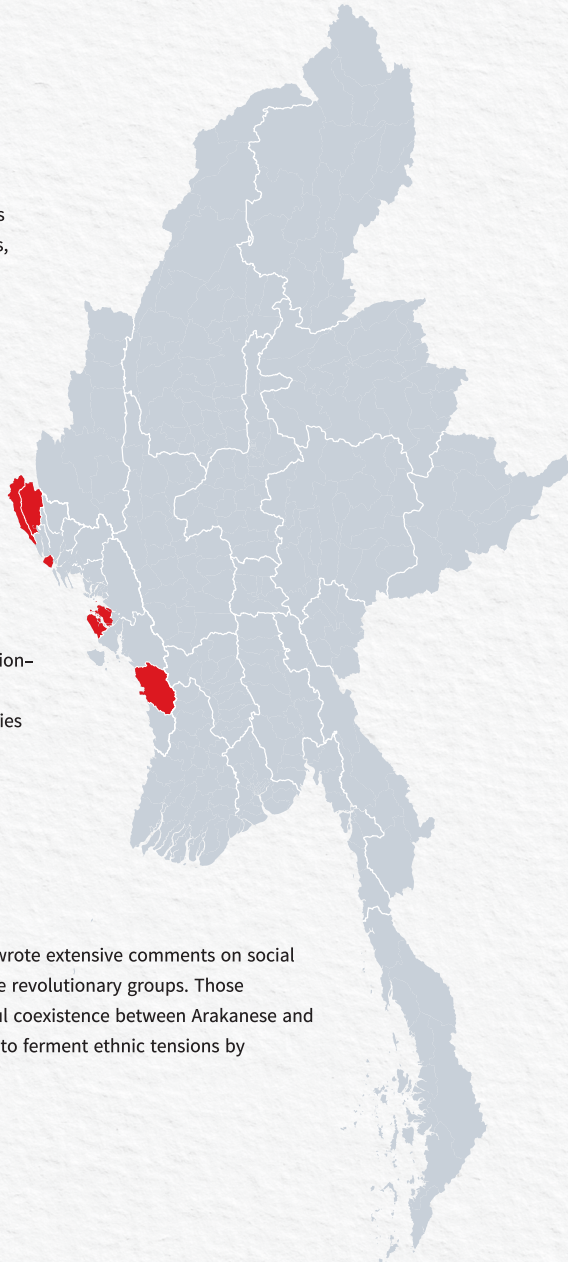
### March and April 2024

The junta coerced Rohingyas and Muslims from Sittwe, Buthidaung, and Maungdaw to organize anti-AA demonstrations.

### May 2024

Disputes occurred between the AA and some revolutionary groups due to reports, stating that the AA forces murdered Rohingyas and burned down their properties and houses.

In response to these incidents, the AA's top leaders wrote extensive comments on social media expressing their views on Rohingyas and some revolutionary groups. Those comments became significant challenges for peaceful coexistence between Arakanese and Rohingyas. Moreover, the junta stepped up its effort to ferment ethnic tensions by capitalizing these comments.



### 3.1 Exploitation by the Junta

When analyzing the way pro-military Telegram channels' portrayal of AA, these channels at first narrated the AA who prioritized Rohingyas' interests over that of Arakanese in November 2023 when fighting resumed in Rakhine. For the next two months, these channels continued to accuse the AA of erasing Arakanese from their own land, handing the Arakanese land to Rohingyas, organizing Muslim militias, and attempting mix Arakanese with Rohingyas when the armed confrontation in Rakhine was gaining momentum. Bangladesh was identified as the primary supporter of the AA. On the other hand, the AA was also accused of letting young Arakanese men die in battles with junta forces. Subsequently, the AA forced Rohingyas to marry Arakanese women. Additionally, it was mentioned that the AA took control of northern Rakhine to protect and settle Rohingyas who were referred as invaders from religious and ethnic perspectives. However, starting from March, the narrative changed from "Muslim-backed AA furthering the interests of Muslims" to "Muslims suffering under AA's oppression". In March, around 100 Muslim youth under the military who were conscripted died in Ahngumaw battle. In response, pro-military Telegram channels denied that any Muslim had fallen during the battle, claiming that AA was afraid of Muslims siding with the military. On 19 March 2024, the junta reportedly coerced Rohingyas in Buthidaung to organize anti-AA demonstrations. Meanwhile, pro-military Telegram channels exaggerated by framing it as "peace-loving Bengalis criticizing the actions of terrorists AA". They also reported on anti-AA demonstrations held by Muslims in Sittwe on 21 March 2024 and the junta forces escorted these demonstrations. Moreover, destruction of Rohingyas' lives and properties committed by the junta was repeatedly portrayed as if the AA was the culprit behind them. In April 2024, the narrative changed from "the AA promoting Rohingyas" to "the AA oppressing Muslims". Moreover, phrases such as "AA is committing genocide on Bengalis", "AA is targeting Bengalis" began to gain prominence.

Moreover, the AA was also accused of involvement in narcotic trafficking and this narrative could also be found in the junta's media. pro-military Telegram channels referred Tun Myat Naing as "the opium king".



## 4. Framing Burman-Buddhist Events to Escalate Tensions

### 4.1 Ethnic and Religious Tensions in Laukkaing, Northern Shan



**8 January 2024**

A video of a person in MNDA uniform smashing a Buddhist pagoda on Point-2202 (Sin-U-Gin Hill) with a sledgehammer went viral on social media.

**Around 12 January 2024**

After the capture of Laukkaing by the MNDA, it was reported in some media that the MNDA only allowed people with fluency in Chinese language to re-enter the town. Meanwhile, people who hold Burman National Registration Cards (NRC) were reportedly barred from entering the town (BBC Burmese, 2024). Moreover, Burmans were required to present a recommendation letter written by a Kokang local to enter the town. In response to these reports, MNDA's spokesperson Lee Kyar Win stated that background checks were necessary under the current emergency state and the MNDA welcomed anyone with no political issues.

**12 March 2024**

The MNDA's spokesperson Lee Kyar Win explained that the demolition of the Burman Residence aimed to boost the economic development of the town, and it was not a retaliatory action toward a specific group. However, some reports claimed that buildings in Burman residence were not in the way of the proposed road expansion.

**9 January 2024**

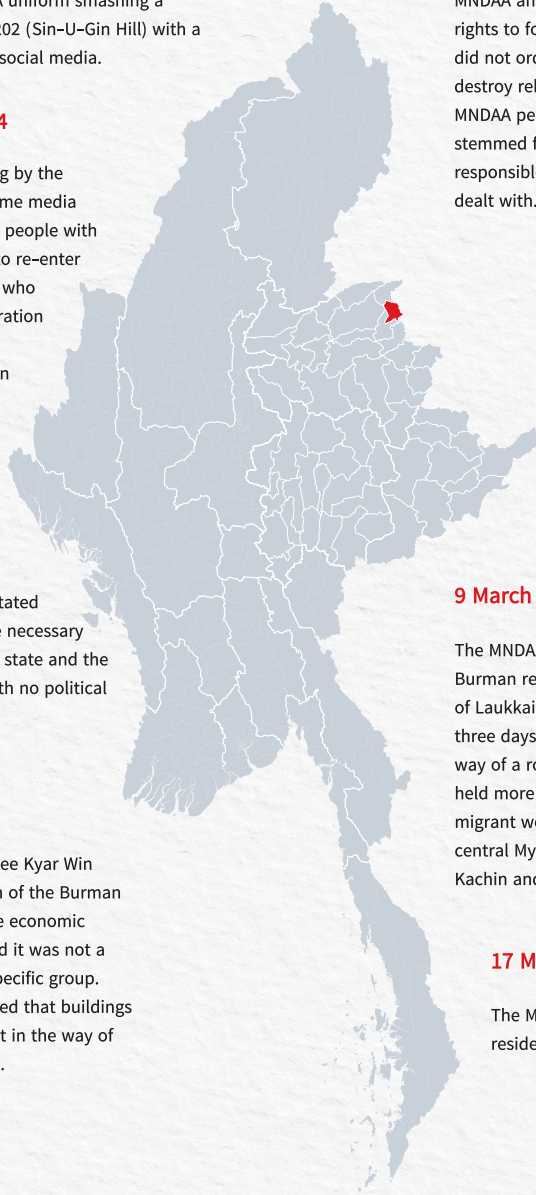
MNDA announced that they respect the rights to follow any religion, and they did not order to violate religious rules or destroy religious buildings, and that the MNDA personnel smashing a pagoda stemmed from personal motive and that responsible person would be properly dealt with.

**9 March 2024**

The MNDA ordered locally called Burman residence located at the center of Laukkaing town to evacuate within three days as their houses were in the way of a road expansion. The residence held more than 60 households of migrant workers, mainly Burman from central Myanmar, as well as Shan, Kachin and Kokang.

**17 March 2024**

The MNDA demolished Burman residence.





## 4.2 Exploitation by the Junta

Following the onset of Operation 1027, pro-military Telegram channels portrayed the MNDAA's combat activities as “an invasion by Chinese descendants who cannot speak Burmese or do not use Myanmar currency”. Additionally, this invasion was framed as the territorial reclamation of Chinese people in accordance with their ancient Chinese map. The channels incited Chinese-Myanmar conflicts by urging Myanmar people to be wary of this invasion and to protect their territories. Ultrationalists who support the military held protest events, urging China not to be involved in the northern Shan conflicts. In these events, Burmese-nationalist symbols such as Burmese language, Myanmar flag, and Buddhism were used extensively. The MNDAA were also accused of discrimination and oppression targeting Burmans. The channels also triggered Chinese-Myanmar conflicts by claiming that only Chinese and other ethnic people were accepted in Kokang while Burmans were not welcomed; only Chinese Yuan is recognized as the sole currency; and that Chinese is forcibly used as the conducting language in schools”. These claims were also depicted as the destruction of cultures and values of native people, employing the distinction between Chinese and Burmans as well as native and non-natives.

After the video of an individual in MNDAA uniforms smashing a pagoda with sledgehammer went viral on social media, pro-military Telegram channels perpetuated ethnic and religious tensions by spreading the video. During January 2024, pro-military ultrationalists condemned the MNDAA throughout the country. They also disseminated hate speeches delivered by ultrationalists, Naymingyi Sayardaw from Pa-O region and U Wasawa from Sagaing's Kanbalu, who leads militias. Pro-military Telegram channels claimed that “more than 200,000 monks had already enlisted to receive military training” to compel young people to accept military conscription. Furthermore, Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations were depicted as heretics and threats to Buddhism. They also highlighted the allegations that the MNDAA's leaders ordered to wipe out Burmese cultures and Buddhism in their controlled areas. The disunity of Burmans fueled the MNDAA's actions

against Burmans, and in future, Burmans would be expelled from their own country; the Shwedagon Pagoda would be destroyed. Meanwhile, the military junta and Burmans were described as neutral to ethnic minorities. In contrast, the MNDA was portrayed as an organization actively undermining the interests of Burmans and Buddhism.

Pro-military Telegram channels reported that Kokang people were furious of the MNDA's action against pagoda in Laukkaing, fearing that Burmans would inflict retribution upon them. They also reported that "Kokang people from Mandalay, Mogoke, and Pyinoolwin condemned the destruction of Buddhist pagodas". Kokang people who didn't participate in the condemnation were accused as complicit in defaming Buddhism. They also asked for the expulsion and murder of Kokang people who lived in Burman-dominated areas. They claimed that "the destruction of Burman residence in Laukkaing didn't go down well with Burmans," and they are preparing to take retributive actions on Kokang people residing in Mandalay, Mogoke, and Yangon.

The ethnic revolutionary forces' attacks against the military were distorted and framed in ethno-religious terms, implying that the forces were mere rebels furthering their own interests. Moreover, Burmans and other ethnic groups were set against each other by stating that Burman PDF were being exploited by ethnic dictators and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations were turning Burmans against Burmans. The military who had oppressed ethnic minorities for decades was portrayed as the benevolent institution protecting the union and governing all ethnic groups without privileging one group over another. Employing the existing military propaganda, the capture of territories by ethnic revolutionary forces was portrayed as not just the loss for the military but the loss of all Myanmar citizens and a threat to the sovereignty of the nation.



### 4.3. Tensions between Burmans and Arakaneses in Kyauktaw, Rakhine.





### 7 & 8 February 2024

During the clash between the junta and the AA in Kyauktaw, the junta soldiers along with their family members from the Military Operations Command 9 and the Light Infantry Battalion 375 fled with three naval vessels along Kaladan River. These vessels were later sunk during the confrontation with the AA forces. Despite the AA's efforts to rescue those onboard, the attempt was compromised by junta forces, resulting in the death of not only some of those onboard but also an AA personnel (People's Spring, 2024).

### 4 March 2024

The AA announced that it had provided shelters to survivors of the incident, providing photos as evidence (DVB Burmese, 2024a).

## 4.4 Exploitation by the Junta

Capitalizing on this incident, pro-military Telegram channels framed the clash between the junta and the AA as an ethnic conflict between Burmans and Arakanese. They also accused the AA of massacring Burmans to stir ethnic conflict, by concealing the fact that AA had rescued junta soldiers' families. They repeatedly put forward the narrative that "Arakanese had violently murdered Burmans because of their hatred for Burmans" to exacerbate animosity toward Arakanese among the populace. Moreover, an attempt was made to sow division between Arakanese from southern and northern parts of Rakhine. Prominent military supporter Bullet Hla Swe expressed his aversion for Arakanese by saying that he did not want to eat Rakhine monti or even see an Arakanese anymore. Anti-Arakanese posters were shown up in Yangon and Mandalay, and their contents were distributed online by pro-military Telegram channels. In addition, the military was praised for aiding Arakanese during Arakanese-Rohingya conflict and in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha, while the AA was denounced for not displaying any gratitude for such assistance.



## | 5. Conclusion

Ethnic and religious conflicts have been plaguing Myanmar for decades and the junta constantly monitor ethnic and religious tensions in order to exploit them in advancing their interests and consolidating their centralized control. Spring revolution forces<sup>4</sup> should develop concrete policies and comprehensive roadmaps to avoid committing ethnicity-based oppressions, to reduce animosity between ethnic groups, and to prevent ethnic conflicts and violation of human rights norms. Even if precautionary measures were in place, an individual from an ethnic group or an organization could violate human rights norms. In this scenario, relevant stakeholders should coordinate on conducting unbiased investigations and apprehending the culprit. However, it should be noted that portraying an individual's wrongdoing as the misdeed of the whole ethnic group could lead to ethnic conflicts. Similarly, collaborators with the military junta – whether they do so due to coercion or voluntarily – should not be depicted as representatives of their whole ethnic group. Moreover, leaders of revolutionary forces should keep in mind that what they post or write on social media could be interpreted as rules of engagement by their subordinates. Instead of expressing an individual view on social media, a response should be made only after holding inter-group negotiations and forming a consensus on what to do.

After losing a significant amount of territory, the junta denigrated actions of revolutionary forces and highlighted their role in national politics in a positive light. In addition to tensions existing between Burmans and other ethnic groups, ethnic groups around the country also occasionally disagree, collide, and clash with one another. The best way to solve this kind of issue is by holding frequent transparent dialogues among stakeholders, taking an extensive amount of time. Incitement could not only inflame the existing animosities but also amplify the conflict. It cannot be concluded that a centralized political system imposed by the military could lessen ethnic conflicts, subsequently stabilizing the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Spring revolution forces include those who has taken part in the revolution since before the 2021 military coup and continue to do so after the coup, organizations and individuals participating in various sectors in the Spring revolution.



Leading revolutionary forces should be noted that there are few places in Myanmar where an ethnic group resides alone, recognizing the heterogeneous composition of ethnic groups. Subsequently, revolutionary forces must acknowledge that disagreements could arise from individuals who differ in ethnicity, religion and belief. In addressing these disagreements, it is essential to provide every individual and group with equal opportunities to express their beliefs, needs, and policies. Concerned revolutionary groups should strive to strengthen all-inclusive dialogues.

Revolutionary forces should bear in mind that deviation from revolutionary norms must be prevented at all costs. The peaceful coexistence between different ethnicities and religions, a key goal of the revolution can only be achieved through freedom of expressions and transparent negotiations among different stakeholders.

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Exploiting Ethnic Conflicts  
in Attempt to Consolidate  
Military Control