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100 DAYS OF BURMA'S PARLIAMENT: STRENGTHENING THE STATUS QUO

- In the months leading up to the convening of the Parliament, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe issues a series of laws designed to maintain the military's grip on power.
- On 31 January, the People's Assembly and the National Assembly convene amid tight security in Naypyidaw for Burma's first parliamentary session in 22 years. Many MPs complain about being subjected to detention-like living conditions.
- The laws governing parliamentary proceedings gag MPs and restrict civilian access to the Parliament. The regime also bars domestic journalists and foreign correspondents from covering parliamentary proceedings.
- Lack of genuine debate characterizes the proceedings. In the parliamentary question time, ministers brush off questions that deal with important issues and refuse to address the substantive issues raised by the MPs.
- USDP and military-appointed MPs and the Speakers in both Houses of Parliament blocked 87% of the proposals submitted, including a proposal on national reconciliation.
- USDP and military-appointed MPs prioritize the regime's political agenda above the critical political and socio-economic issues that affect the daily life of the Burmese people. The Parliament approves resolutions to oppose economic sanctions and express gratitude to the SPDC.
- After convening the Parliament, the regime continues to commit crimes against humanity and war crimes. Tatmadaw troops attack and forcibly displace hundreds of civilians as part of their military offensives in ethnic areas. The regime also continues to arbitrarily detain and imprison dissidents.

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The 11th of May marks one hundred days since the convening of Burma's Parliament on 31 January. However, the Parliament's first session in 22 years only lasted 14 days for the People's Assembly (Lower House) and the National Assembly (Upper House) and 18 days for the National Parliament (a joint session of both Houses). The session came to an end on 30 March, the same day Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) dissolved. According to the constitution, the National Parliament is required to convene for a regular session "at least once a year."¹ As there is no confirmed date to reconvene the Parliament yet, this could mean that the much-touted 'democratically-elected' Parliament wrapped up its proceedings for 2011 in less than three weeks.

Prelude: SPDC laws strengthen military power

Beginning in October 2010, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe issued a series of laws designed to maintain the military's grip on power. By enacting these laws before the newly-elected Parliament convened, Than Shwe ensured the lawmakers had no say with regard to key policy issues that are vital to the military.

• 21 October 2010: Laws governing parliamentary proceedings

These laws impose severe restrictions on parliamentary debate and participation.² As a result, nothing can happen in the Parliament without the approval of regime officials. [See below *Restrictions dominate parliamentary proceedings*]

• 4 November 2010: Military draft law

The law stipulates that males aged 18 to 45 and females aged 18 to 35 may be drafted to serve in the armed forces for two years.³ The service term could be increased to five years in times of national emergencies.⁴ The law also states that those who avoid conscription could be imprisoned for up to five years.⁵ Observers suggested that the SPDC adopted the new law in an attempt to avoid future claims that recruiters forced people to join the army and to offset the increasing rate of desertions.⁶

• 17 January 2011: Special Fund Law

The law allows the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces to use a "special fund" for any expenses related to national defense and security, without restrictions on the amount taken.⁷ The law also states that the Commander-in-Chief is not accountable to any institution for the use of the fund.⁸

• 27 January 2011: Budget for the 2011-2012 fiscal year

The SPDC allocated 23.6% of the 7.6 trillion kyat (US\$8.45 billion) budget for military expenditures.⁹ By contrast, the regime allocated a paltry 5.4% to the health and education

¹ Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Art. 79

² Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma's Disciplined Democracy

³ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar enacts military draft law for men, women; Mizzima News (11 Jan 11) Military draft seen as threat to ethnic armed groups; DVB (10 Jan 11) Burma introduces military draft; Chinland Guardian (13 Jan 11) Conscription Law Likely to Drive More Youths out of Burma

⁴ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar enacts military draft law for men, women

⁵ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar enacts military draft law for men, women

⁶ Mizzima News (11 Jan 11) Military draft seen as threat to ethnic armed groups

⁷ Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Than Shwe Grants Himself Power to Access 'Special Funds'; AP (04 Mar 11) Myanmar democracy group slams military fund

⁸ AP (04 Mar 11) Myanmar democracy group slams military fund; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Than Shwe Grants Himself Power to Access 'Special Funds'; DVB (07 Mar 11) Politicians decry military budget

⁹ AP (01 Mar 11) Myanmar allocates 1/4 of new budget to military; AP (04 Mar 11) Myanmar democracy group slams military fund; DVB (02 Mar 11) Military prioritised as Burma expands airforce

sectors combined.¹⁰ The budget also earmarked 20 billion kyat (about US\$22 million) for the office of the SPDC.¹¹

Parliament convenes: MPs under “house arrest”

“Under the tightened security, even USDP members felt like people under house arrest.” - A USDP MP from Mandalay.¹²

On 31 January, the People’s Assembly and the National Assembly convened amid tight security in Naypyidaw for Burma’s first parliamentary session in 22 years.¹³ The 14 Division and State Parliaments also convened.¹⁴

Many MPs complained about living in detention-like conditions.¹⁵ When MPs were not in session, they faced severe restrictions on movement.¹⁶ MPs were confined to guesthouses in small rooms without radio or TV or clean running water.¹⁷ MPs were barred from receiving visitors at the guesthouse.¹⁸ MPs who attended parliamentary proceedings received a 10,000 kyat (US\$11.50) daily allowance but ended up spending most, if not all, on meals, accommodation, and transportation.¹⁹

Restrictions dominate parliamentary proceedings

The laws governing parliamentary proceedings gag MPs and restrict civilian access to the Parliament:²⁰

- The laws prevent MPs from making any comment which is deemed to endanger national security, the unity of the country, or violate the 2008 constitution.²¹
- MPs face up to two years in jail if they “write, print or distribute by any means parliament-related documents, information, statistics, drawings, charts or other references.”²²
- MPs must submit parliamentary questions ten days before the start of a meeting. Questions must not affect international relations, lead to the disclosure of state secrets, or undermine the interests of the state and its citizens.²³
- Any person who stages a demonstration in Parliament can be sentenced up to two years in prison.²⁴

¹⁰ AP (01 Mar 11) Myanmar allocates 1/4 of new budget to military

¹¹ AP (01 Mar 11) Myanmar allocates 1/4 of new budget to military; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Than Shwe Grants Himself Power to Access 'Special Funds'

¹² Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Than Shwe Grants Himself Power to Access 'Special Funds'

¹³ AP (31 Jan 11) Tight security as new Myanmar parliament opens; CNN (11 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament opens after 20-year lapse; Reuters (31 Jan 11) As Myanmar new parliament opens, junta's shadow looms large; DPA (31 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament elects military men as house speakers (Roundup); Al Jazeera (31 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament opens doors

¹⁴ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament set for 1st session in 22 years; Telegraph (11 Jan 11) Burma to hold first parliamentary session in 22 years; DPA (31 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament opens amid tight security; Irrawaddy (31 Jan 11) Senior Junta Officials Elected as Heads of Parliament

¹⁵ Irrawaddy (01 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Complain of Detention-like Conditions

¹⁶ Irrawaddy (01 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Complain of Detention-like Conditions; Mizzima News (01 Mar 11) Daily MP life: everything you ever wanted to know

¹⁷ Mizzima News (01 Mar 11) Daily MP life: everything you ever wanted to know

¹⁸ Mizzima News (01 Mar 11) Daily MP life: everything you ever wanted to know

¹⁹ Mizzima News (01 Mar 11) Daily MP life: everything you ever wanted to know

²⁰ Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma's Disciplined Democracy; NLM (11 Jan 11) 17 books on law and bylaw in circulation; Xinhua (21 Jan 11) Myanmar heads for first parliamentary sessions in two decades; Xinhua (10 Jan 11) Myanmar enacts 17 new laws under new state constitution; Mizzima News (10 Jan 11) Burmese Parliaments to convene Jan 31

²¹ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament set for 1st session in 22 years

²² Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma's Disciplined Democracy

²³ Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma's Disciplined Democracy

- Anyone, other than MPs, who enters Parliament without authorization while the body is in session, is subject to a one-year jail term.²⁵

The regime also barred MPs from bringing cameras, laptop computers, mobile phones, and any type of voice transmission or recording devices inside the Parliament buildings.²⁶ In addition, regime authorities barred domestic journalists and foreign correspondents from covering the parliamentary proceedings. The regime allowed only state-run media to cover the session.²⁷ Regime authorities questioned reporters who took photographs near Parliament buildings or tried to approach MPs outside of the Parliament premises.²⁸

Political Parties Registration Law still threatens parties and MPs

Article 12 of the Political Parties Registration Law, adopted by the SPDC in March 2010, states that the Election Commission must dissolve parties that fail to expel a member who is convicted and sentenced to a prison term.²⁹ This provision, which still applies to newly-elected MPs, is an additional tool that could be used by the regime to silence lawmakers. MPs brave enough to speak out will have to consider the consequences for their parties.

In addition, Article 12 of the Political Parties Registration Law states that parties can be dissolved if they “contact or abet” “unlawful” organizations or their members.³⁰ On 5 April, the Election Commission issued a warning to all registered political parties to remind them not to contact unlawful organizations.³¹

Parliamentary debate a sham

“The Parliament representatives [...] are to discuss any matters in unison. It is important not to have a sense of contradiction. The precious time will be lost if they argue with each other. The Parliament should not be in a debate-like situation.” - National Assembly Speaker Khin Aung Myint³²

During the Parliament’s initial meetings, the proceedings were exclusively devoted to the nomination or election of the new regime’s cadre. However, the constitution did not allow for debate over the appointments. The MPs’ only task was to certify that nominees met the constitutional qualifications for the position. MPs complained that they could not assess the qualifications of the nominees because of the short time allocated to the process and because personal biographies were usually incomplete.³³

²⁴ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament set for 1st session in 22 years

²⁵ AP (10 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament set for 1st session in 22 years; Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma’s Disciplined Democracy; Myanmar Times (24 Jan 11) Electronic devices banned in parliaments

²⁶ DVB (18 Jan 11) Rules for parliament released; Mizzima News (18 Jan 11) Foreign reporters prepare to cover Parliament news; Irrawaddy (19 Jan 11) Conditions Set for MPs to Attend Parliament; Mizzima News (19 Jan 11) EC asks MPs to wear national dress in Parliament sessions; Irrawaddy (20 Jan 11) Burma’s Disciplined Democracy

²⁷ DVB (31 Jan 11) Journalists barred from parliament; DPA (31 Jan 11) Myanmar parliament elects military men as house speakers (Roundup); Irrawaddy (31 Jan 11) Senior Junta Officials Elected as Heads of Parliament; Mizzima News (02 Feb 11) Media group criticises Parliament for lack of media access

²⁸ Mizzima News (03 Feb 11) Most reporters leave Naypyidaw, return home

²⁹ Political Parties Registration Law, Article 12 (a) (vi)

³⁰ Political Parties Registration Law, Article 12 (a) (iii)

³¹ Irrawaddy (19 Apr 11) Election Commission Warns Burmese Parties; DVB (20 Apr 11) Politicians warned against ‘unlawful’ contacts

³² Mizzima News (02 Feb 11) A Parliament without debate?; Irrawaddy (22 Feb 11) Burma’s ‘15-Minute’ Parliament

³³ Mizzima News (22 Feb 11) Lack of information, short sessions upset lawmakers; Irrawaddy (22 Feb 11) Burma’s ‘15-Minute’ Parliament

On 9 March, after being in session for over five weeks, MPs in both Houses of Parliament were finally allowed to discuss proposals and pose questions to ministers and other regime officials.³⁴ However, it was apparent that the process was just for show. The ministers' responses often included a large amount of statistical and background information but refused to address the substantive issues raised by the MPs.³⁵ Ministers brushed off questions that dealt with important issues such as land ownership rights, the impact of energy projects on local communities, education in ethnic nationality areas, and the conflict in Eastern Burma:

- **9 March:** SPDC Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Htay Oo claimed that the existing laws were “the most appropriate to safeguard peasants’ rights.”³⁶
- **15 March:** SPDC Minister of Electric Power-1 Zaw Min said that the Myitsone dam project [responsible for massive displacement and loss of livelihood for local communities] “cannot produce any negative effects at all.”³⁷
- **15 March:** SPDC Minister of Education Chan Nyein said that teaching ethnic nationality languages in schools is “impossible” because “there are many national races in Myanmar.”³⁸
- **21 March:** SPDC Minister of Information Kyaw Hsan blamed Thailand for the ongoing conflict in Karen State: “If the neighbor [Thailand] would stand as a friendly nation, problems of Kayin [Karen] State would soon be solved.”³⁹

Parliament promotes regime’s agenda

Despite the plethora of critical political and socio-economic issues that affect the daily life of the Burmese people, USDP and military-appointed MPs prioritized the regime’s political agenda above all else. The USDP made sanctions and international legitimacy the Parliament’s top priorities:

- **24 March:** USDP People’s Assembly MP Htay Oo introduced a resolution to declare the Parliament’s opposition to economic sanctions on Burma.⁴⁰ This was the first issue brought before MPs for their consideration since the National Parliament convened.
- **28 March:** National Parliament’s Speaker Khin Aung Myint introduced a resolution to join the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly.⁴¹

Amnesty, national reconciliation rejected

Despite hopes that the newly-elected Parliament could tackle issues of fundamental importance such as national reconciliation and the release of political prisoners, the regime ensured that these topics remained off the table:

- **22 March:** During question time in the People’s Assembly, SPDC Minister for Home Affairs Maung Oo ruled out the possibility of an amnesty law. Maung Oo said that according to the

³⁴ Xinhua (09 Mar 11) Myanmar parliaments due on legislation process

³⁵ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Question, Get Stonewalled by Ministers

³⁶ NLM (10 Mar 11) Existing farmland laws most appropriate to safeguard peasants’ rights - Pyithu Hluttaw continues first regular session for sixth day

³⁷ NLM (25 Mar 11) EP-1 Minister answers question about electricity generation, power supply projects

³⁸ NLM (16 Mar 11) Education Minister replies to Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Zaw Tun’s question

³⁹ NLM (22 Mar 11) Information Minister replies to question of U Saw Thein Aung of Hlaingbwe Constituency about aspiration of Kayin nationals

⁴⁰ NLM (25 Mar 11) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives submit proposals Approval sought at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to discuss proposals

⁴¹ NLM (29 Mar 11) First regular session of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw continues for 16th day - Queries raised and replied, proposal discussed, approval sought - Pyidaungsu Hluttaw agrees to join ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) as full-fledged member; NLM

SPDC-drafted 2008 constitution only Burma's President, not the Parliament, has the power to grant amnesty to prisoners.⁴²

- **25 March:** AMRDP National Assembly MP Banya Aung Moe introduced a proposal in the National Parliament that urged the regime to promote national reconciliation and a political solution with regard to conflict in ethnic nationality areas. The National Parliament overwhelmingly rejected the proposal by a 520 to 106 vote, with 20 abstentions.⁴³

After failing to act on important issues, the Parliament saw fit to note its gratitude to the SPDC. On 29 March USDP People's Assembly MP Htay Oo introduced a resolution to thank the SPDC "for its efforts to build a peaceful, modern, developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation."⁴⁴

Parliament blocks 87% of the proposals

USDP and military-appointed MPs and the Speakers in both Houses of Parliament blocked the overwhelming majority of the proposals submitted. Only five out of the 39 proposals were approved:

- The People's Assembly approved only four of the 17 proposals submitted by MPs.⁴⁵
- In the National Assembly, ethnic parties introduced *all* the proposals for the body's consideration. Of the 16 proposals, only one was approved.⁴⁶ The sole proposal approved dealt with the upgrade of a road in Chin State.⁴⁷
- The National Parliament failed to approve all six proposals submitted.

100 days of Parliament in numbers

135	Average length of a parliamentary meeting (in minutes - including breaks)
14	Number of days the Lower and Upper House were in session
18	Number of days the National Parliament was in session
104	Number of questions submitted
39	Number of proposals introduced
5	Number of proposals approved

⁴² NLM (23 Mar 11) Home Affairs Minister replies to question on "Amnesty"; Irrawaddy (23 Mar 11) No Amnesty for Now: Home Minister

⁴³ NLM (26 Mar 11) Proposals submitted, approved at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session; SHAN (01 Apr 11) Burma Army close all boat routes to Shan army areas

⁴⁴ NLM (30 Mar 11) Pyidaungsu Hluttaw records proposal on "expressing gratitude to SPDC for its efforts and beliefs in efforts of the President and members of the Union Government to build a peaceful, modern, developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation"

⁴⁵ NLM (24 Mar 11) Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker give brief account of election, formation, raising queries and discussing proposals

⁴⁶ NLM (24 Mar 11) Undertakings of Hluttaw concerning questions and proposals of Hluttaw representatives explained

⁴⁷ NLM (15 Mar 11) Proposal to upgrade Gangaw-Yezwa road approved

Parliament recesses, restrictions on MPs continue

On 30 March, the National Parliament's first session concluded.⁴⁸ According to the constitution, the National Parliament is required to convene for a regular session "at least once a year."⁴⁹ As such, the Parliament will not have to convene again until 2012. Committees formed during the Parliament's first session will carry out the legislative groundwork until the Parliament reconvenes.⁵⁰ President Thein Sein hand-picked the MPs that make up the 10 parliamentary committees (four each for the People's Assembly and the National Assembly plus two joint committees for the National Parliament).⁵¹ USDP MPs hold the Chair and at least a 75% majority in all but one committee. In addition, the committees' deliberations are secret. According to the parliamentary rules, the committees' proceedings must "not be leaked out" and minutes of the meetings must "not be handed out."⁵²

After the Parliament went into recess, the regime continued to restrict MPs' activities. In early April, regime authorities in Myebon Township, Arakan State, prevented Rakhine National Progressive Party (RNPP) elected MPs Pe Than and Maung Nyo from holding public meetings with communities affected by cyclone Giri.⁵³

⁴⁸ First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw regular session concludes successfully - Elected President, elected Vice-Presidents, Union level organization members make affirmation - President delivers address, his address recorded

⁴⁹ Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Art. 79

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) Parliamentary Debates to Be Concluded Before April; Myanmar Times (14 Mar 11) MPs encouraged by committees

⁵¹ Bill Committee; Public Accounts Committee; Rights Committee; Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee; Bill Joint Committee; and Public Accounts Joint Committee

⁵² NLM (02 Mar 11) Second day regular session of First Pyithu Hluttaw held - Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee formed; NLM (04 Mar 11) First regular session of Pyithu Hluttaw continues for third day - 15-member Public Accounts Committee formed; NLM (05 Mar 11) First Pyithu Hluttaw Regular Session continues for fourth day - 15-member Hluttaw Rights Committee formed - Hluttaw Rights Committee formed to scrutinize cases concerning breach of duties, powers and rights of Hluttaw, Hluttaw Committee or Hluttaw representative; NLM (08 Mar 11) First regular session of Pyithu Hluttaw continues for fifth day - 15-member Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee formed - Government's guarantees, pledges and undertakings shall be implemented within fixed period and on; NLM (02 Mar 11) First regular session of Amyotha Hluttaw in its second day - Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee formed; NLM (04 Mar 11) First regular session of Amyotha Hluttaw goes on for third day - 15-member Public Accounts Committee formed; NLM (05 Mar 11) Amyotha Hluttaw carries on first regular session for fourth day - 15-member Hluttaw Rights Committee formed - Suitable number of members, nominations for members, chairman and secretary will be submitted to the hluttaw for approval; NLM (08 Mar 11) First regular session of Amyotha Hluttaw continues for fifth day - 15-member Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee formed - Committee shall present an interim report if Amyotha Hluttaw fails to present a final report on the scheduled day

⁵³ DVB (22 Apr 11) MPs blocked from cyclone victims; Narinjara News (26 Apr 11) Arakanese MP Asks Permission for Public Meeting

MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE NAYPYIDAW...

SERIOUS CRIMES COMMITTED

The regime continued to commit crimes against humanity and war crimes after the Parliament convened.

Forced displacement

- **2 March:** Tatmadaw troops from IB 66 forced about 200 households in Nansang Township, Shan State, to relocate as part of the preparations for a new regional command.⁵⁴
- **7 March:** It was reported that Tatmadaw troops in Nansang Township, Shan State, forced residents of three villages to abandon their homes and burned at least 300 houses.⁵⁵
- **17 March:** It was reported that Tatmadaw troops ordered the residents of 11 villages located in Kunhing, Nansang, and Kyethi Townships, Shan State, to leave their homes.⁵⁶

Attacks against civilians

- **24 February:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 407 shot and killed a local villager in Southern Karen State.⁵⁷
- **14 March:** Clashes between Tatmadaw troops and SSA-N forces caused the deaths of three civilians in Kyethi and Monghsu Townships, Shan State.⁵⁸
- **16 March:** During the Tatmadaw's operation to seize the SSA-N's Nam Lao base in Tangyan Township, Shan State, an artillery shell killed four monks in a local temple.⁵⁹
- **24 April:** Heavy fighting between troops from DKBA Brigade 5 and Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB 543 in Kyainnseiki Township, Karen State, caused the death of one civilian.⁶⁰

Unjustified destruction of property

- **19 April:** Tatmadaw troops from IB 43 burned 70 homes in seven villages in Mong Pieng Township, Shan State, because they believed the residents provided support to the SSA-S.⁶¹

Arbitrary arrest

- **3 April:** Special Branch police in Rangoon arrested Nay Myo Zin, a volunteer with the NLD-sponsored blood donation group, while he was on his way to donate blood.⁶²

Rape

- **14 April:** Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, gang-raped three local women, aged 22, 25, and 40.⁶³
- **29 April:** Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, gang-raped an 18-year-old local girl.⁶⁴

CONFLICT ESCALATED

Despite the convening of the Parliament, the situation in ethnic nationality areas continued to deteriorate. In addition to the regime's ongoing offensives against ethnic non-ceasefire groups, the Tatmadaw increasingly targeted ceasefire groups who rejected the junta's Border Guard Force scheme. The situation for residents living in conflict zones remained grim as the regime re-launched its inhumane 'four cuts' campaign.⁶⁵

Shan State

Despite a ceasefire agreement signed in 1989, the Tatmadaw and the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) clashed numerous times.⁶⁶ In Southern and Eastern Shan State, the Tatmadaw also clashed with the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).⁶⁷ In addition, the regime increased its military presence in Shan State with the deployment of thousands of soldiers near territory controlled by the SSA-N and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). SPDC Army personnel also blocked strategic transportation routes to hamper armed opposition forces.⁶⁸

Kachin State

On 7 February, the Kachin Independence Organization's (KIO's) armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), clashed with Tatmadaw forces for the first time since signing a ceasefire agreement in 1994.⁶⁹ Following the 7 February skirmish, the Tatmadaw deployed additional forces and military equipment in Kachin State. In addition, the Tatmadaw's closure of major transportation routes, and its attempts to recruit Kachin youth into its ranks caused concern among the civilian population.⁷⁰

Karen State

Tatmadaw troops continued to engage in heavy fighting with forces from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) Brigade 5 and the Karen national Liberation Army (KNLA).⁷¹

Chin State

Even in Chin State, which has seen little fighting in recent times, in February and March there were several clashes between Chin National Army forces and Tatmadaw troops in Paletwa Township.⁷²

DISSIDENTS DETAINED

In his March 2011 report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that there were still 2,189 political prisoners, including 177 women, in prisons across Burma.⁷³

After convening the Parliament, the regime continued to arbitrarily detain and imprison dissidents.

- **22 February:** Courts in Rangoon's Ahlone and Kamayut Townships sentenced activists Myo Min Thu, Thaw Zin, Bo Bo Thein, Thaung Htike Oo, and Yan Aung Soe to prison terms ranging from six to 11 years for violation of the Immigration Act, the Unlawful Associations Act, and for committing offenses against the state.⁷⁴
- **3 April:** Special Branch police in Rangoon arrested Nay Myo Zin, a volunteer with the NLD-supported blood donation group, while on his way to donate blood at a hospital in Thingangyun Township.⁷⁵

According to Ojea Quintana's report, 142 political prisoners suffer from serious medical conditions which require immediate attention.⁷⁶ In February and March, reports continued to surface of political prisoners' abysmal conditions, which included torture, ill-treatment, and the denial of medical treatment:

- **4 February:** Authorities in Rangoon's Insein prison placed political prisoner Phyo Wei Aung in solitary confinement for a month because he complained about senior inmates bullying other prisoners.⁷⁷
- **8 February:** It was reported that authorities in Putao prison in Kachin State had denied family visits to Htet Htet Oo Wai for three months. Htet Htet Oo Wai is in solitary confinement and in poor health.⁷⁸
- **9 February:** It was reported that authorities in Putao prison, Kachin State, denied medical treatment to Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Chairman Hkun Htun Oo, 66, for his deteriorating health.⁷⁹
- **15 March:** It was reported that prison authorities in Myingyan prison, Mandalay Division, denied medical treatment to 88 Generation Student Thet Thet Aung. Thet Thet Aung suffers from hypertension and an unspecified stomach ailment.⁸⁰

DISPLACEMENT CONTINUED

Since the convening of the Parliament, human rights abuses, persecution, and armed conflict have continued to displace large numbers of people.

In February, authorities in Thailand, India, and Indonesia detained over 280 Rohingya boat people who attempted to flee persecution in Burma:

- **1 February:** After running out of provisions, a boat with 68 Rohingya reached landfall in Phuket, Thailand, while attempting to reach Malaysia. Thai authorities detained them for questioning.⁸¹
- **10 February:** It was reported that Indian police found over 90 Rohingya stranded on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.⁸²
- **15 February:** One hundred and twenty-nine Rohingya boat people reached landfall in Aceh Province, Indonesia.⁸³

On 25 February, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that Burma was burdening other countries in the region. Ojea Quintana said that the "grave" human rights situation in Burma was causing more and more people to flee human rights abuses and persecution.⁸⁴

In March, the Tatmadaw's military operations and attempts to cut support and supply lines to Shan State Army - North (SSA-N) forces resulted in the forcible relocation of hundreds of villagers.

- **2 March:** Tatmadaw troops from IB 66 forced about 200 households in Nansang Township to relocate as part of the preparations for a new regional command.⁸⁵
- **7 March:** It was reported that Tatmadaw troops in Nansang Township forced the residents of three villages to abandon their homes.⁸⁶ It was also reported that between 200 and 300 villagers from Kunhing Township fled to safety.⁸⁷
- **16 March:** The seizure of the SSA-N's Nam Lao base in Tangyan Township forced between 500 and 600 villagers from Monghsu Township to flee.⁸⁸
- **17 March:** It was reported that Tatmadaw personnel ordered the residents of 11 villages located in Kunhing, Nansang, and Kyethi Townships to leave their homes.⁸⁹

In May, ongoing clashes between the Tatmadaw and joint forces from DKBA and KNLA forced about 700 villagers from Kyainnseikyi Township, Karen State, to flee into Thailand's Tak Province.⁹⁰

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION STIFLED

Following the convening of the Parliament, it soon became apparent that the regime had no intention of relaxing its severe restrictions on freedom of information.

On 4 February, a Rangoon District Court sentenced DVB reporter Maung Maung Zeya to 13 years in prison under the Electronics Act and the Unlawful Association Act.⁹¹

The regime's crackdown on freedom of information targeted foreign nationals, too. On 10 February, SPDC authorities arrested Ross Dunkley, the Australian editor-in-chief and co-owner of the Myanmar Times.⁹² Reports differed on the reasons for Dunkley's arrest.⁹³ However, observers suggested that the real reason for Dunkley's detention could be a business conflict with the Burmese co-owner of the Myanmar Times, USDP member Tin Tun Oo.⁹⁴

The regime tightened its grip on internet users with new measures:

- **2 March:** The regime-controlled Myanmar Post and Telecommunications ordered all internet cafés across Burma to stop providing Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) communication services.⁹⁵ The ban affects calls made over the internet through software such as Skype, Gtalk, and Pfingo.⁹⁶ Observers believed that the difficulty in monitoring this form of communication might have been the reason behind the ban.⁹⁷
- **4 April:** Regime authorities in Rangoon's Kyauktada, North Okkalapa, and Tamwe Townships raided internet cafés to ensure they complied with the ban on VoIP communication services.⁹⁸

ECONOMY DETERIORATED

As Parliament convened in Naypyidaw, Burma's economy reacted to the political uncertainties of a new regime. In addition, there were reports on hefty wage increases for civil servants and rumors of the issuance of a new 10,000 kyat bank note.⁹⁹ As a result, commodity prices rose and wide fluctuations occurred in currency and gold values.¹⁰⁰ In addition, an increase in diesel and gas prices caused further inflationary pressure.¹⁰¹

In February, rumors of a shake-up in the SPDC leadership also hit the banking sector. Following rumors that SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye was about to be forcefully retired, bank account holders rushed to withdraw their savings from Kanbawza Bank, which is owned by junta crony and Maung Aye's associate Aung Ko Win.¹⁰²

The regime continued to benefit from the sale of state-owned property and natural resources.

- In January and February, the regime netted about 800 billion kyat (US\$800 million) from the sale of 291 state-owned properties.¹⁰³ Regime cronies Tay Za, Steven Law, Zaw Zaw, and Chit Khaing acquired most of the properties in an auction process that observers considered akin to money-laundering.¹⁰⁴
- From 10-22 March, the regime earned US\$2.8 billion from gem sales at the annual Gems Emporium held in Naypyidaw from 10 to 22 March. It was the highest income in the Emporium's 47-year history.¹⁰⁵

In addition, since the convening of the Parliament, various Chinese companies signed deals with the regime regarding oil, natural gas, mining, and hydropower projects.¹⁰⁶

- ⁵⁴ SHAN (03 Mar 11) Forcibly relocated people to be forcibly relocated again
- ⁵⁵ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) 'Four Cuts' Forcing Shan Villagers from Homes
- ⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes
- ⁵⁷ KHRG (05 Apr 11) Villager shot and killed by Tatmadaw in southern Doooplaya
- ⁵⁸ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes
- ⁵⁹ Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao; SHAN (22 Mar 11) The brunt of the fighting comes to the people – as usual
- ⁶⁰ Mizzima News (25 Apr 11) Fighting erupts between government's troops and breakaway DKBA; DVB (26 Apr 11) Border force defects, attacks Burma unit; Irrawaddy (26 Apr 11) Karen Groups Join Forces on the Frontline
- ⁶¹ SHAN (27 Apr 11) 7 villages in Shan East burnt down by Burma Army soldiers
- ⁶² Mizzima News (04 Apr 11) Blood donation group volunteer arrested in Rangoon; DVB (05 Apr 11) Ex-army captain arrested, interrogated
- ⁶³ Kaladan News (28 Apr 11) Villagers of Maungdaw North flee to Bangladesh
- ⁶⁴ Kaladan News (28 Apr 11) Villagers of Maungdaw North flee to Bangladesh
- ⁶⁵ Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Naypyidaw Orders New "Four Cuts" Campaign
- ⁶⁶ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes; Mizzima News (14 Mar 11) Second clash breaks out between junta and SSA-N; Mizzima News (15 Mar 11) Burmese Junta and SSA-N fighting continues; Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao; SHAN (14 Mar 11) Junta, Shan army exchange fire again
- ⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (24 Feb 11) Three Burmese Soldiers Killed in Southern Shan State; SHAN (23 Feb 11) Junta army beefing up after fight; Mizzima News (28 Feb 11) Fighting intensifies between the regime and Shan; SHAN (22 Apr 11) Junta army has women porters lead the way in war zone; SHAN (27 Apr 11) 7 villages in Shan East burnt down by Burma Army soldiers
- ⁶⁸ SHAN (17 Mar 11) Junta offensive puts ethnic alliance to the test; SHAN (14 Mar 11) Junta, Shan army exchange fire again
- ⁶⁹ Mizzima News (07 Feb 11) KIO, junta fighting breaks out; first since 1997; DVB (07 Feb 11) Gunfire exchanged in Kachin state; Kachin News Group (07 Feb 11) Fighting begins between Kachin and Burmese Armies in Northern Burma; Irrawaddy (07 Feb 11) Burmese Officer Killed in Clash with KIA
- ⁷⁰ Mizzima News (24 Feb 11) Fleeing forced recruitment, young Kachin head to KIO bases; Kachin News Group (24 Feb 11) Junta deploys tanks and troops near Kachin headquarters; Mizzima News (25 Feb 11) Junta sends more tanks to Kachin State; KNG (02 Mar 11) Burmese troops block road with logs in response to KIA; SHAN (01 Mar 11) Junta army continues reinforcing troops in anti-Border Guard Force program territories
- ⁷¹ Irrawaddy (01 Feb 11) DKBA Attacks Junta's Strategic 'Three Mountain' Outpost; Irrawaddy (11 Feb 11) DKBA Changes Tactics, More Civilians at Risk; Mizzima News (11 Mar 11) Sixteen Junta Troops die in guerilla ambush, says KNLA; KIC (21 Mar 11) Burmese Army officers hurt by KNLA guerrilla tactics; KIC (22 Mar 11) Burmese Army force attacked near Kanellay Camp; KIC (31 Mar 11) Soldiers from combined Burmese Army forces killed, injured by KNLA; Irrawaddy (25 Apr 11) Three Reportedly Killed in Internal BGF Clash; Mizzima News (25 Apr 11) Fighting erupts between government's troops and breakaway DKBA; DVB (26 Apr 11) Border force defects, attacks Burma unit; Irrawaddy (26 Apr 11) Karen Groups Join Forces on the Frontline; DVB (26 Apr 11) Border force defects, attacks Burma unit
- ⁷² Irrawaddy (23 Feb 11) Junta Weighing Options to Reign in BGF Defectors; Irrawaddy (09 Mar 11) Three Junta Troops Killed by Arakan Liberation Army
- ⁷³ HRC, 16th session, Progress report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, 7 March 2011, A/HRC/16/59
- ⁷⁴ AFP (25 Feb 11) Myanmar jails five dissidents: lawyer; Mizzima News (24 Feb 11) Five given prison terms in Water Festival bombings
- ⁷⁵ Mizzima News (04 Apr 11) Blood donation group volunteer arrested in Rangoon; DVB (05 Apr 11) Ex-army captain arrested, interrogated
- ⁷⁶ HRC, 16th session, Progress report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, 7 March 2011, A/HRC/16/59
- ⁷⁷ DVB (22 Feb 11) Bomb suspect lawyer 'denied case report'
- ⁷⁸ AAPP (08 Feb 11) AAPP concerned about denial of family visits for sick political prisoners; Irrawaddy (08 Feb 11) Sick Political Prisoner Denied Family Visits; DVB (09 Feb 11) Ill political prisoner denied visits
- ⁷⁹ Irrawaddy (09 Feb 11) Jailed SNLD Chairman in Ailing Health
- ⁸⁰ Irrawaddy (15 Mar 11) Jailed Activist Refused Medical Treatment
- ⁸¹ Irrawaddy (03 Feb 11) Thailand Ignores Calls for UN Access to Rohingya
- ⁸² BBC (10 Feb 2011) Burmese Rohingya refugees rescued in India's Andamans; DPA (10 Feb 11) Rohingya refugees left at sea by Thailand rescued near India; DVB (11 Feb 11) Rohingya refugees claim Thai 'pushback'
- ⁸³ AFP (16 Feb 11) 129 Myanmar migrants found off Indonesia: Police; BBC (16 Feb 11) Burma Rohingyas found drifting off Indonesia
- ⁸⁴ UN News Center (24 Feb 11) Myanmar's human rights abuses burden region with exodus of refugees – UN expert;; DVB (25 Feb 11) UN says Burma 'a regional burden'; Chinland Guardian (26 Feb 11) Chin Refugees Get Surprise Visit from UN Rights Expert
- ⁸⁵ SHAN (03 Mar 11) Forcibly relocated people to be forcibly relocated again
- ⁸⁶ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) 'Four Cuts' Forcing Shan Villagers from Homes
- ⁸⁷ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) 'Four Cuts' Forcing Shan Villagers from Homes
- ⁸⁸ Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao
- ⁸⁹ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes
- ⁹⁰ DVB (05 May 11) Karen fighting forces 700 to flee; TAN Network (04 May 11) Burmese Karens Flee Battle into Thailand
- ⁹¹ Irrawaddy (08 Feb 11) Crackdown on critics continues as Burma claims political change; RSF (09 Feb 11) Another journalist gets a long jail sentence; AFP (12 Feb 11) Watchdog slams Myanmar after reporter jailed; DVB (07 Feb 11) DVB video journalist gets 13 years
- ⁹² AFP (12 Feb 11) Australian newspaper boss arrested in Myanmar; AP (12 Feb 11) Australian editor of Myanmar newspaper jailed; BBC (12 Feb 11) Burma: Australian publisher Ross Dunkley arrested; Bangkok Post (12 Feb 11) Myanmar Times editor arrested; DPA (12 Feb 11) Myanmar arrests Australian newspaper publisher (Roundup)
- ⁹³ DPA (12 Feb 11) Myanmar arrests Australian newspaper publisher; DPA (12 Feb 11) Myanmar arrests Australian newspaper publisher (Roundup); ABC (14 Feb 11) Charges against Burma newspaper editor untrue: associate; BBC (12 Feb 11) Burma: Australian publisher Ross Dunkley arrested; Irrawaddy (15 Feb 11) Dunkley Accused of Assault; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 11) Leaked 'Statement' Adds to Dunkley Intrigue; Bangkok Post (20 Feb 11) Dancing with the devil

⁹⁴ AFP (12 Feb 11) Australian newspaper boss arrested in Myanmar; Bangkok Post (12 Feb 11) Myanmar Times editor arrested; DPA (12 Feb 11) Myanmar arrests Australian newspaper publisher; DPA (12 Feb 11) Myanmar arrests Australian newspaper publisher (Roundup); AP (12 Feb 11) Australian editor of Myanmar newspaper jailed; Mizzima News (12 Feb 11) Publisher Dunkley held in Insein Prison; NYT (12 Feb 11) Myanmar Arrests a Newspaper Editor; VOA (12 Feb 11) Burma Arrests Australian Publisher; BBC (12 Feb 11) Burma: Australian publisher Ross Dunkley arrested; Irrawaddy (17 Feb 11) Leaked 'Statement' Adds to Dunkley Intrigue; Bangkok Post (20 Feb 11) Dancing with the devil

⁹⁵ Mizzima News (16 Mar 11) Government bans Internet overseas calls; Irrawaddy (16 Mar 11) Junta Makes Internet Phones Illegal; Chinland Guardian (19 Mar 11) VoIP Services Banned After Junta's Order in Burma

⁹⁶ Mizzima News (16 Mar 11) Government bans Internet overseas calls; Irrawaddy (16 Mar 11) Junta Makes Internet Phones Illegal

⁹⁷ DVB (17 Mar 11) Internet calls banned as junta loses out; Global Post (21 Mar 11) Burma tries to strangle Skype

⁹⁸ Irrawaddy (07 Apr 11) Burmese Authorities Crack Down on VoIP Calls

⁹⁹ Irrawaddy (16 Feb 11) Gold, Dollar Jump Amid Rumors, Fears of Instability; Irrawaddy (01 Mar 11) Burma's Civil Servants Expect 380 Percent Salary Hike

¹⁰⁰ Irrawaddy (14 Feb 11) Prices for Gold, US Dollar Rise Following Announcement of New Cabinet; Irrawaddy (25 Feb 11) Rice Prices Rising on Rumor of New Banknote

¹⁰¹ Irrawaddy (16 Feb 11) Gold, Dollar Jump Amid Rumors, Fears of Instability; Myanmar Times (14 Mar 11) Petrol prices soar 25 percent; Irrawaddy (02 Mar 11) Burma's Gasoline Prices Peak

¹⁰² Irrawaddy (24 Feb 11) Maung Aye Rumors Lead to Run on Bank

¹⁰³ Myanmar Times (04 Apr 11) 'Unbelievable' property sales push prices up in Yangon: agents; Myanmar Times (04 Apr 11) Govt property auction nets K800b

¹⁰⁴ Irrawaddy (23 Mar 11) Privatization Linked to Money Laundering

¹⁰⁵ Xinhua (10 Mar 11) Annual gems fair opens in Myanmar's new capital

¹⁰⁶ Mizzima News (15 Feb 11) Natural gas discovered in Sagaing Division; Reuters (14 Feb 11) Sinopec JV finds large gas deposits in Myanmar; IMNA (14 Feb 11) Natural gas found at Thingadon Test-well No. 1 in Pale Township; Xinhua (17 Feb 11) China, Myanmar sign new cooperation accord; DVB (3 Mar 11) China to manufacture trucks in Burma; AP (05 Apr 11) High-ranking Chinese Communist official 1st VIP guest of new Myanmar president