
Subject: The Situation in Myanmar for Canadians

Issue

Myanmar has been in a country-wide civil war since the Myanmar military enacted a coup in 2021. The country has a long history of brutal military dictatorships and experienced a period of liberalization in 2011 and democratization in 2015. The situation in Myanmar is of concern to Canada in the realms of democracy, human rights, women's rights, displaced and refugee populations, and geopolitical stability.

Background

History: Myanmar's recent history is one of colonialism, dictatorship, and oppression.

- The country of over 50 million in southeast Asia borders China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh.
- Before WW2, it was colonized by the British. After the war, it declared independence and a short period of democracy.
- In 1962, the country experienced a coup which maintained military rule under General Ne Win until 1988. Military rule was maintained under multiple dictators until liberalization in 2011, which did not allow full free elections.
- In 2015, largely free elections were held which led to the victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) under Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.
- In 2017, [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) defended the military atrocities against the Rohingya and was subsequently criticized by the international community. She lost her Canadian honorary citizenship title.

The Myanmar military junta enacted a coup in February 2021, imprisoning elected MPs and National League for Democracy government officials.

- After the [NLD party won a landslide election in 2020](#), solidifying its second term of government, the Myanmar military made [unfounded claims of election fraud](#), and subsequently [arrested and imprisoned elected MPs and government](#), including the State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi and the president U Win Myint.
- The [coup sparked nationwide protests](#) and a [Civil Disobedience Movement](#). The military responded with violence.

Elected MPs who escaped arrest formed a parallel parliament known as the CRPH, which subsequently founded the National Unity Government (NUG) with its loosely linked armed revolutionary wings known as the People's Defence Forces (PDFs).

- The NUG was formed by elected MPs forming the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH). The [NUG has ministries](#) led by MPs, civil society advocates, and public administrators
- [PDFs](#) have joined with existing Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) to oppose [the military junta](#).
- These groups are [largely crowdfunded by global diaspora networks](#).

EROs and PDFs have managed to challenge military control of more than half of Myanmar's territory. Myanmar's military has experienced rapid decline, in morale and on the battlefield.

- Some long-standing EROs, composed of different ethnic groups in Myanmar's diverse population, have been [in conflict with the Myanmar military for decades prior](#).
- [EROs and PDFs have dislodged military control over a majority of Myanmar's territory](#).
- These organizations face challenges around [public service capacity and local governance capacity](#) in the face of large territorial gains.
- The [Myanmar military presents significant weakness through losses in combat, large-scale defections and lack of popular support](#). They have [activated Conscription Laws](#) in the hopes of retaining personnel numbers.

Myanmar's NUG, EROs, PDFs, and various consultative councils have made the pursuit of a Federal Democracy Charter core to their goals.

- Various groups have [contributed to discussions of a federal system](#) that would abolish previous constitutions that privileged the military and imposed centralized control.

The situation for Myanmar's many minority ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, has gotten worse since the onset of the coup.

- The Rohingya, who have faced persecution for decades and a genocide in 2017, are now increasingly persecuted in Rakhine State by both the [Arakan Army](#) and the [Myanmar military](#).
- Today, over a [million Rohingya refugees live in poor conditions in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh](#), with few rights and little hope of repatriation.

Briefing Note

May 30, 2024

- The NUG has made [public commitments](#) towards more Rohingya representation and citizenship in a new Myanmar.
- Many ethnic groups have EROs that have since been engaging in offensives against the military. [Operation 1027](#) was an offensive by China-backed EROs leading to major gains against the military.

Canada: Canada made commitments to support the Rohingya in 2018 and Myanmar broadly in 2021. Approximately 588 million CAD was disbursed from [2018-2024](#).

- In 2018, Special Envoy [Bob Rae launched a report outlining Canada's need to address the Rohingya crisis](#). Although Canada committed to the recommendations, many of them have not been fulfilled.
- With the change in political situation since the coup, Canada needs a new guiding strategy.
- In the [latest budget, there is no dedicated line for Myanmar/Rohingya aid](#). Canada must fulfill its commitments to these groups.

Inside Canada: Diaspora Groups, Parliamentary Friends of a Democratic Burma, Levels of Immigration/Refugees

- Many Myanmar emigrants come to Canada as refugees and students.
- [Canada hosts approximately 19,000 Myanmar-origin residents](#).
- The [Parliamentary Friends of a Democratic Burma](#) is chaired by Canadian MPs.
- NGOs Involved in Myanmar Issues: [Interpares](#), [International Development Research Council](#), [Parliamentary Centre](#), and Multilateral Institutions (UN, WFP, etc.)
- Organizations of Interest: [Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge Hub](#) (MyPACK), [UBC Myanmar Initiative](#), and Diaspora Organizations (BCAO, BCN, BCENO, RCC).

Charts

Chart 1: Refugees, IDPs, Asylum Seekers in/leaving Myanmar ([Source: UNHCR](#))

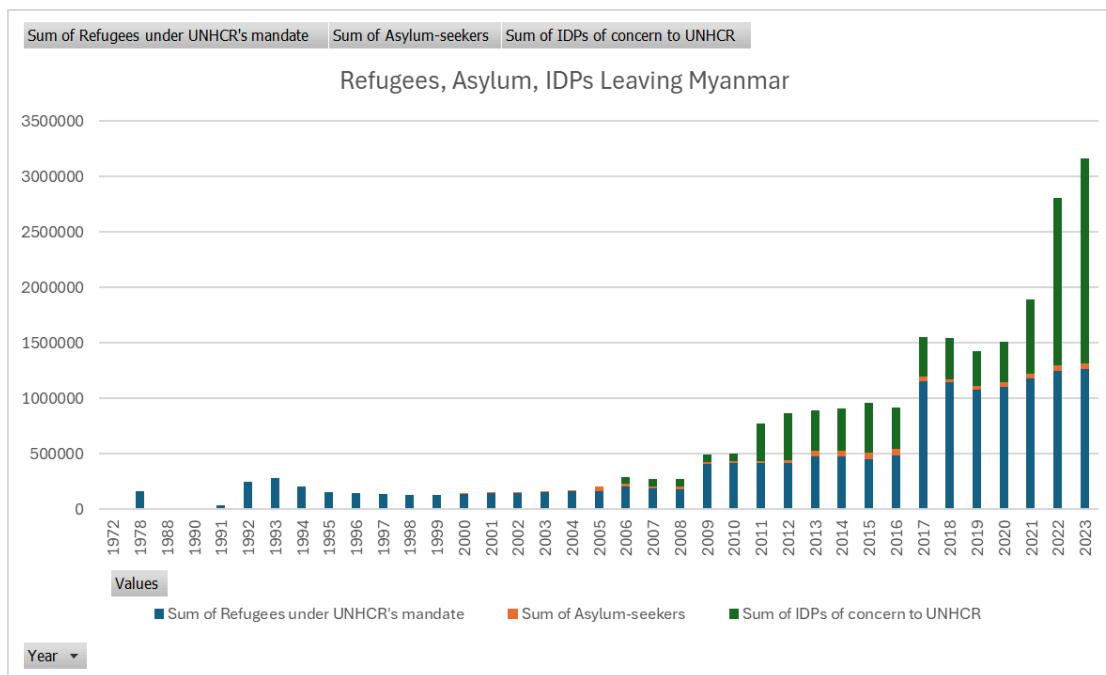


Chart 2: Refugees, Asylum Seekers Entering Canada from Myanmar ([Source: UNHCR](#))

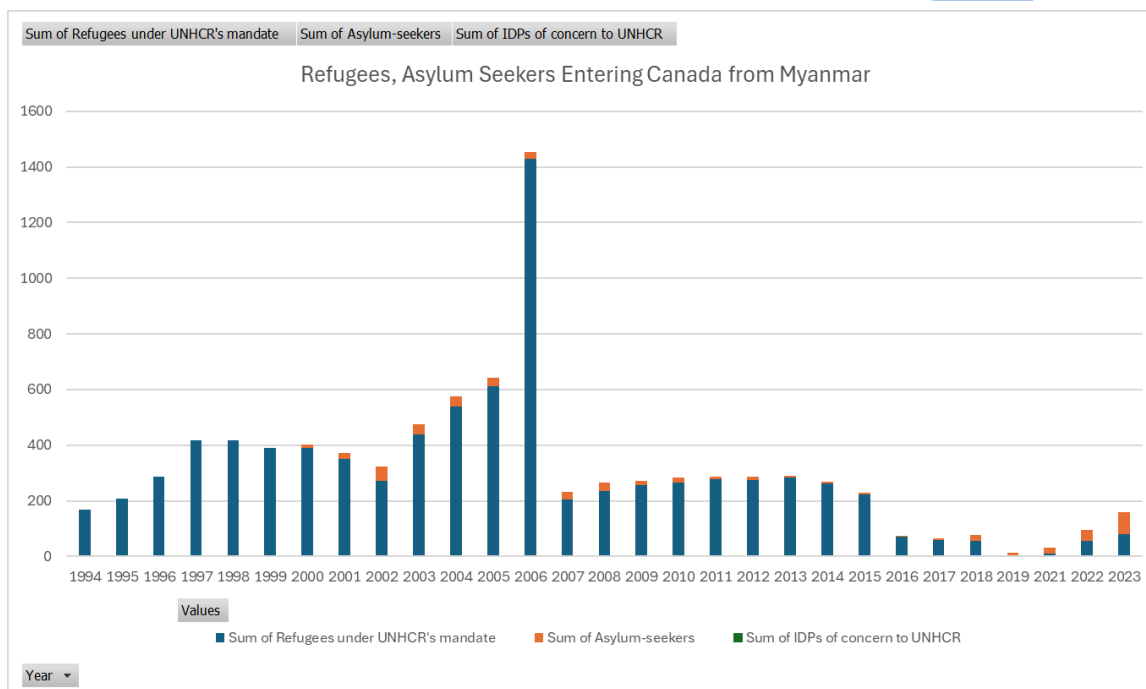


Chart 3: International Students from Myanmar (Source: Statscan)

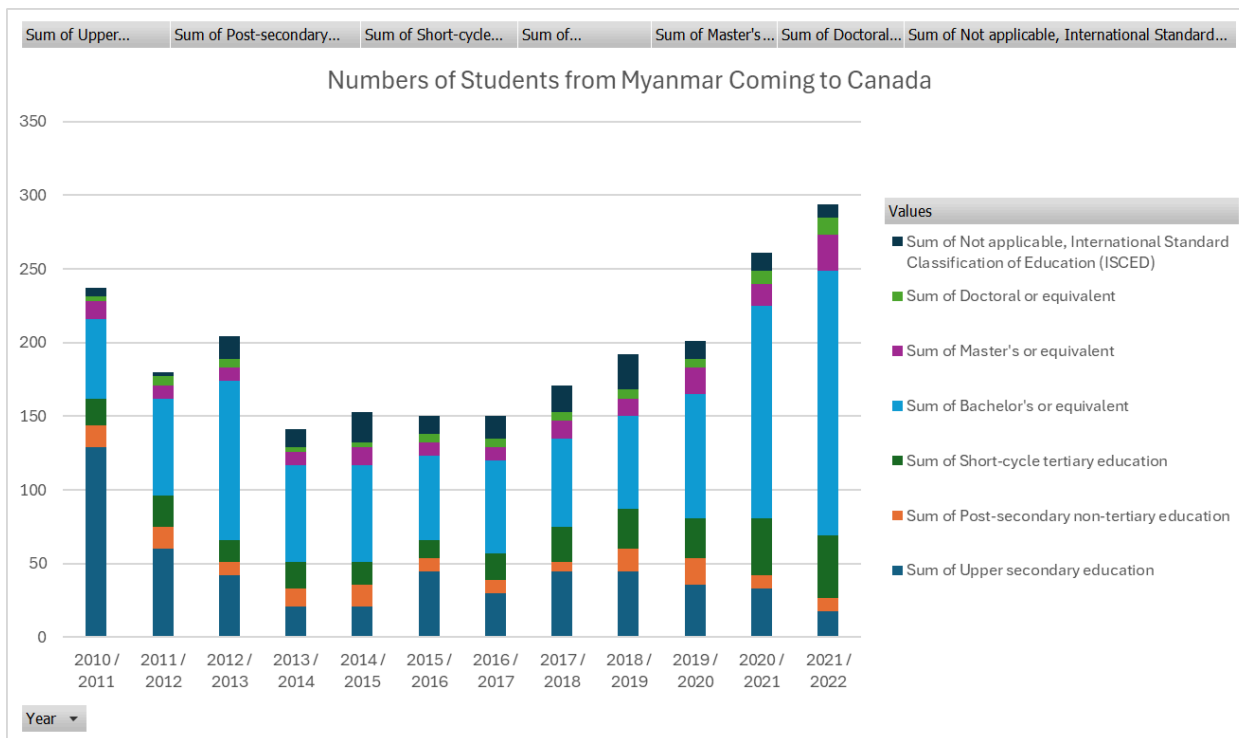


Chart 5: Canadian Funding to Myanmar by Program (Global Affairs Canada)

Yearly Contributions by Global Affairs Canada to Myanmar

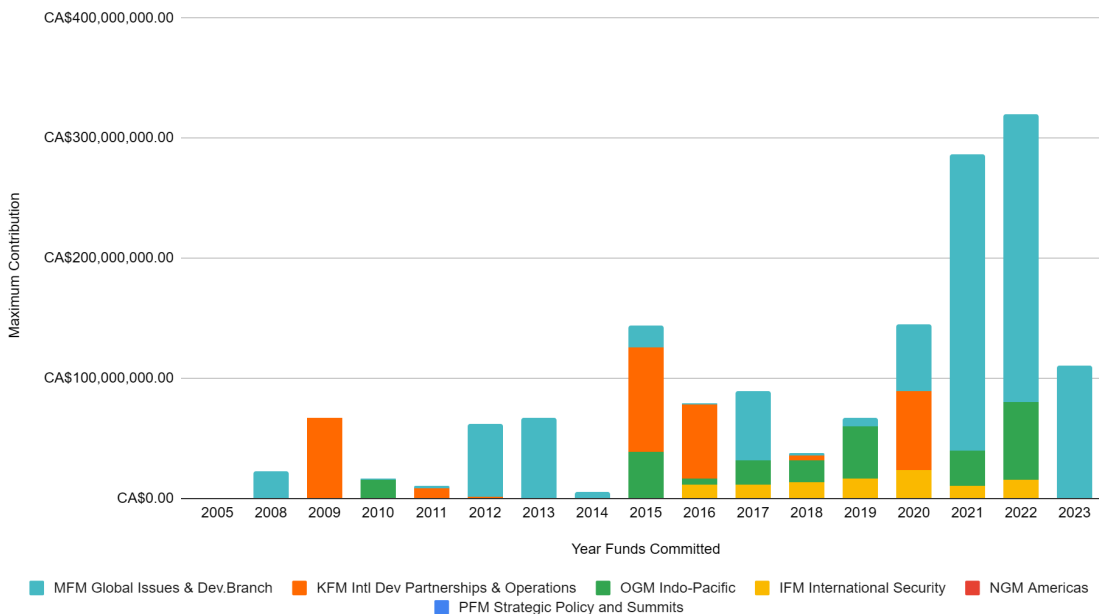


Chart 6: Canadian Funding to Myanmar by Aid Type (Global Affairs Canada)

Yearly Contributions by Global Affairs Canada to Myanmar

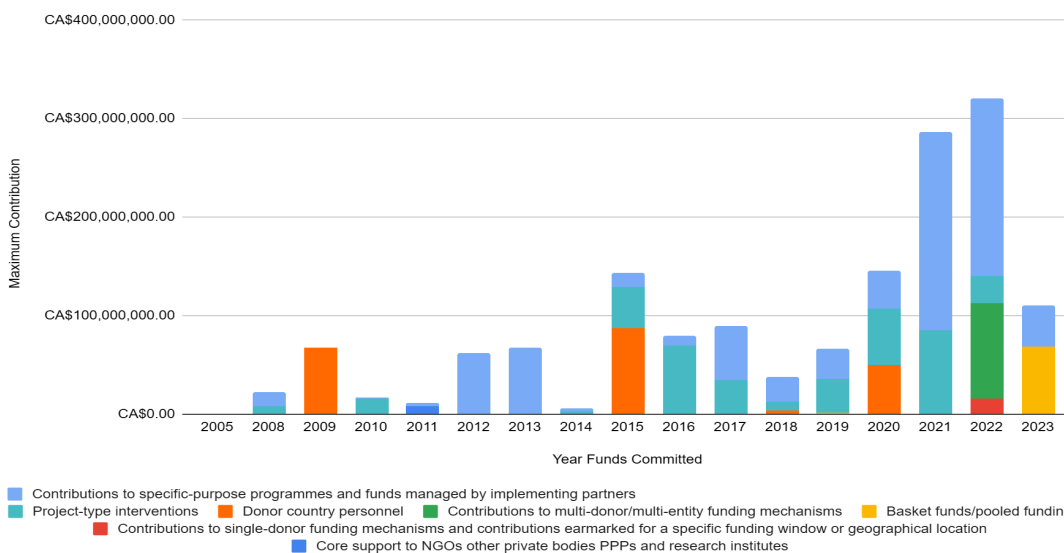
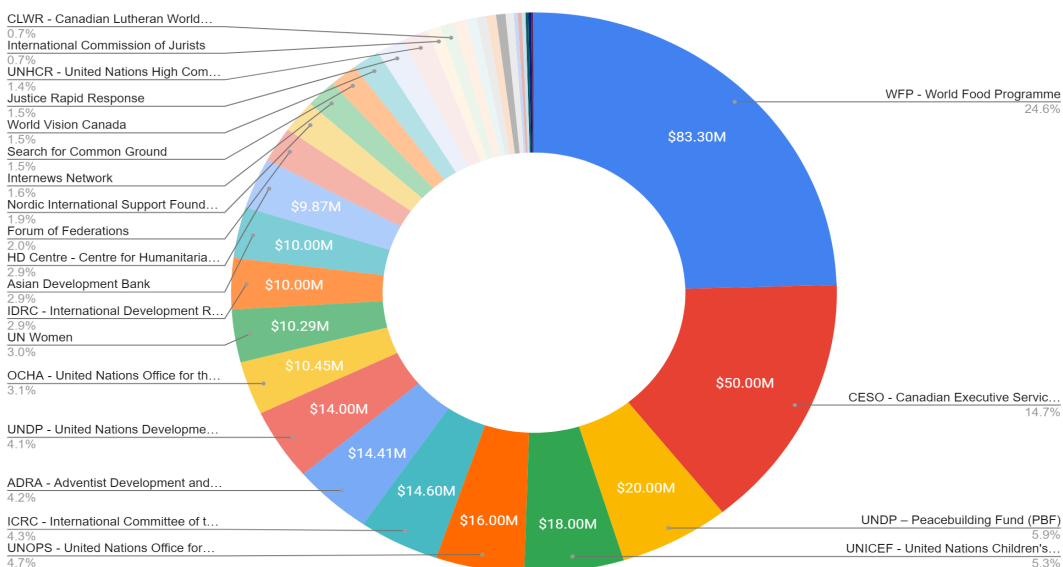


Chart 7: Funding Towards Myanmar Projects 2017-2021 (Source: Global Affairs Canada)

Funding to Organizations towards Myanmar Projects (2017-2021)



Briefing Note

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Chart 8: Funding Towards Myanmar Projects 2021-2024 (Source: Global Affairs Canada)

Funding to Organizations towards Myanmar Projects (2021-2024)

