

ASEAN & Myanmar's Proposed 2025 Elections

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SUMMARY

- **The Myanmar military is organizing widely unsupported elections for 2025:** The Myanmar military junta, also known as the State Administration Council (SAC), is organizing elections. The so-called and limited census collection¹ took place from October 1 to 15 despite ongoing conflict throughout most of the country. The census was opposed and boycotted throughout the country.²
- **The Myanmar military lacks the control necessary to host credible elections.** The Special Advisory Council on Myanmar³ states that the junta does not have stable control over 86% of the country's territory representing 67% of the population. Hosting elections would thus exclude most of the country and its various groups.
- **Elections are likely to incite violence further and not address regional security concerns (5PC Point 1: Immediate Cessation of Violence).** Election-related events and organizing activity is likely to be targeted by opposition groups, especially given that the National Unity Government (NUG) and various Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) have opposed the ongoing election proposals. Already, an explosion was reported near the Chinese consulate in Mandalay⁴ due to Chinese support for the so-called elections⁵ whereas at least 43 people have been reported to have been killed in response to the census.⁶
- **Recognizing elections held by a conflict actor (the military) would disenfranchise resistance forces (5PC Point 2: Constructive Dialogue Among All Parties Concerned).** ASEAN countries that recognize the Myanmar elections will be directly disenfranchising much of the country, especially opposition groups who will be effectively shut out of the political process. A comprehensive political agreement across groups needs to be established before any elections should be held with supervision by a neutral party.
- **The sincerity of the junta's recent invitations to opposition are questionable because of their track record in the 1990 and 2020 elections.** The junta has recently invited opposition and armed groups to the proposed junta-led elections. The NUG and various EROs have already rejected the junta's invitations as an election based on the 2008 Constitution will be seen and interpreted as a sham. Additionally, the track record of previous junta-led elections has bred mistrust among groups who see junta as unwilling to follow through with election results.
- **The ASEAN Chair can send an Envoy to Myanmar to initiate dialogue (5PC Point 3: ASEAN Chair Envoy Mediation).** The Envoy can potentially engage the junta and other actors, charting the path towards a common agreement supported by all stakeholders involved.

¹ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-wraps-up-failed-population-census.html>

² <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/census-takers-protectors-face-rebel-attacks-10072024170033.html>

³ <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/2024/05/briefing-paper-effective-control-in-myanmar-2024-update/>

⁴ <https://apnews.com/article/china-consulate-attack-myanmar-bombing-mandalay-c5be224fc967cab8fdcf065a14c260b8>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-will-support-democratic-transition-myanmar-says-foreign-minister-2024-08-16/>

⁶ <https://english.dvb.no/regime-nationwide-census-faces-deadly-consequences/>

How do these elections work?

The SAC-appointed **Myanmar Union Election Commission (UEC)** is the junta-led election administering body. It holds considerable power in Myanmar's elections,⁷ including the mandate to run elections, appoint sub commissions, compile and amend voter lists, postpone elections, cancel elections in parts of the country, and allow and bar political parties and candidates. A census was planned to take place from October 1st to 15th⁸. **Elections may take place in 2025.**

The junta lacks the control necessary to host credible elections given a poor census process⁹ and lacking stable control over 86% of the country's territory representing 67% of the population.¹⁰ Hosting elections would thus exclude most of the country and its various groups, making the pursuit of free and fair democratic elections highly unlikely.

Which parties have been allowed to run federally?

Of the 13 parties that won seats in the 2020 federal elections, only 6 of those parties have been allowed to run in the upcoming 2025 elections.

- **House of Representatives:** Barred Parties represent 283/330 possible seats; **86% of electable seats disenfranchised in the upcoming elections.**
- **House of Nationalities:** Barred Parties represent 153/168 electable seats; **91% of electable seats disenfranchised in the upcoming elections.**

In addition to dissolving the National League for Democracy (NLD) and 40 parties that refused to register in the new elections in protest of the jailing of the elected government,¹¹ ¹² the junta-controlled Union Election Commission has also banned more than 80 groups from election activity.¹³ Many of these groups are ethnic-based parties that have now been barred from the political process.

Who recognizes Myanmar's upcoming federal elections?

As of this report, China,¹⁴ Thailand,¹⁵ and Russia¹⁶ have signalled their support for junta-held elections. The US, Japan, and the UK have condemned the banning of political parties from the election.¹⁷ The UK, Canada, Taiwan, and the US have also explicitly condemned the holding of elections by the junta regime.¹⁸ **Any ASEAN recognition of the election would create further polarization geopolitically**, solidifying the junta's ties with China and Russia against the West's ties with the NUG and various EROs. This also goes against the spirit of the point of the 5PC to promote dialogue among all parties.

⁷ <https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2021.33>

⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-announces-census-promised-2025-election-2024-09-02/>

⁹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/census-takers-protectors-face-rebel-attacks-10072024170033.html>

¹⁰ <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/2024/05/briefing-paper-effective-control-in-myanmar-2024-update/>

¹¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/28/myanmar-junta-dissolves-suu-kvis-nld-party-state-media>

¹² <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/nug-and-nucc-ask-parties-to-boycott-myanmar-juntas-sham-election.html>

¹³ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/arakan-national-party-election-07022024080051.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/china-supports-myanmar-junta-plan-fresh-elections-foreign-minister-wang-yi-4550251>

¹⁵ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/myanmars-crisis-the-world/thailand-pledges-to-help-myanmar-junta-with-controversial-poll-plan.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/myanmar-junta-russia-agree-on-election-cooperation>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/30/us-uk-japan-and-australia-condemn-myanmar-for-banning-40-political-parties>

¹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/28/uk-canada-taiwan-criticise-myanmar-as-generals-unleash-corrective-purge>

Elections will likely incite violence and will not address regional security concerns

(5PC Point 1: Cessation of Violence)

Election-related events and organizing activity have already been targeted by opposition groups and will likely intensify. Opposition groups that have been largely disenfranchised by the junta will not consider the junta-held elections as legitimate and will target SAC personnel and supporters. Bombings have already occurred in Yangon¹⁹ and near the Chinese consulate in Mandalay.²⁰ Additionally, at least 43 people have been reported to have been killed by anti-junta forces due to their census activity.²¹ **Increased violence will lead to more internal displacement inside Myanmar as well as increased refugee flows into the region.**

Junta invites opposition in September, but lacks credibility. Opposition reject

(5PC Point 2: Constructive Dialogue)

Among other concerns, an election run by the Myanmar military and based on the 2008 Constitution will be seen and interpreted as a sham. On September 26, likely under pressure by China, the SAC issued an invitation to the opposition and armed groups to join the upcoming election process.²² This invitation has been rejected by the opposition. In the invitation, the opposition are referred to as “terrorists”. Hours later, the SAC proceeded to bomb Lashio.²³ Although accepting the offer may introduce the possibility of political dialogue among all parties, it will likely not be accepted until larger changes are made by the junta.

Additionally, the track record of previous junta-led elections, particularly in 1990 and 2020, which both led to rejection of the results, has bred mistrust among groups who see junta as unwilling to follow through with democratic outcomes.

The ASEAN Chair has an opportunity to begin political process

(5PC Point 3: ASEAN Chair Envoy)

The third point of the 5PC suggests that the ASEAN Chair appoint a Special Envoy to mediate dialogue with the support of the ASEAN Secretary-General. The ASEAN Chair can set into motion initial attempts to promote the targeted reduction of violence, the release of jailed political opposition leaders, and electoral reforms in dialogue with all stakeholders involved.

Malaysia, as the Chair of ASEAN, has an opportunity to establish its legacy on the Myanmar crisis. Through the use of multiple mechanisms and strategies, it can reinforce the ASEAN Way and centrality through its implementation of the Envoy. By directing the Envoy to engage the junta and other stakeholders, Malaysia can chart an unprecedented path towards a common agreement supported by all stakeholders involved which ultimately leads to a stable Myanmar in the future.

¹⁹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/census-blasts-yangon-election-10012024071558.html>

²⁰ <https://apnews.com/article/china-consulate-attack-myanmar-bombing-mandalay-c5be224fc967cab8fdcf065a14c260b8>

²¹ <https://english.dvb.no/regime-nationwide-census-faces-deadly-consequences/>

²² <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-urges-armed-opposition-join-political-fold-elections-2024-09-26/>

²³ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-airstrikes-follow-peace-talk-proposal.html>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Seek pathways towards a political agreement between groups with supervision by a neutral party through the ASEAN Special Envoy. (5PC Point 3: ASEAN Chair Envoy).** ASEAN must engage with all parties in discussions around the terms for a political dialogue process as well as the role of any mediator in that dialogue. The Envoy should also work towards mutual agreement on substantive issues to be included in dialogues, including the process of elections.
2. **Refuse to recognize current junta-led elections unless major progress on political agreements between groups can be effectively established in line with the Five-Point Consensus (5PC Point 2: Constructive Dialogue).** The elections, as they are currently held, will not result in stability within the country. As we have already seen, violence has already occurred during the census collection period which was largely boycotted and poorly fulfilled.
3. **Call for the release of imprisoned opposition leaders and the unbanning of groups that participated in the 2020 elections.** Future elections will only be recognized by most groups in a process that involves the release of opposition leaders. Additionally, the parties that have participated in the 2020 elections must be unbanned. Any elections, if they are to take place, must meet the standard of free and fair elections. External supervision should be promoted so as to ensure the elections, if hosted, meet such standards.
4. **Pursue targeted reduction of violence between stakeholders in Myanmar, especially by the Myanmar junta (5PC Point 1: Cessation of Violence).** Resistance forces will certainly not engage in dialogue with the Myanmar military if they continue to face airstrikes. Malaysia, through the Envoy, can facilitate agreements between groups that opens up the opportunity for further dialogue. While reduction of all violence may not be possible in the short term, Malaysia can pursue reductions in particular domains, including the end of attacks in religious, healthcare, educational, and civic institutions, along with the establishment of humanitarian corridors for cross-border aid.

This brief was produced by the Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge Hub (MyPACK) at the University of Toronto. For more information, visit munkschool.utoronto.ca/ai/myanmar-policy-and-community-knowledge-hub.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1: 2020 Federal Election Results and Participation in 2025 Election

Red box if not participating in the 2025 elections; Green if participating.

No.	Party Name	House of Representatives	House of Nationalities	Participating in the 2025 Election?
1	National League for Democracy (NLD)	258	138	No
2	Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)	26	7	Yes
3	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)	13	2	No
4	Arakan National Party (ANP)	4	4	No
5	Pa-O National Organization	3	1	Yes
6	Ta'ang National Party (TNP)	3	2	No
7	Kayah State Democratic Party	2	3	Yes
8	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	2	3	Yes*
9	Arakan Front Party (AFP)	1	0	Yes
10	Kachin State People's Party (KSPP)	1	1	Yes
11	Wa National Party	1	0	Yes
12	Zomi Congress for Democracy (ZCD)	1	0	No
13	New Democratic Party (Kachin)	0	1	No
	Appointed Members (Military)	110	56	NA
	Total	440	224	-

Sources: Walker, Nigel, *Briefing Paper: Myanmar: 2020 Parliamentary Elections*, 4 February 2021.

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9127/>, Myanmar Union Election Commission Registered Party List (as of September 3, 2024). [Mon Unity Party granted status on Sept 12, 2024.](#)

TABLE 2: PARTIES ALLOWED TO RUN IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Red box if not participating in the 2025 elections; Green if participating.

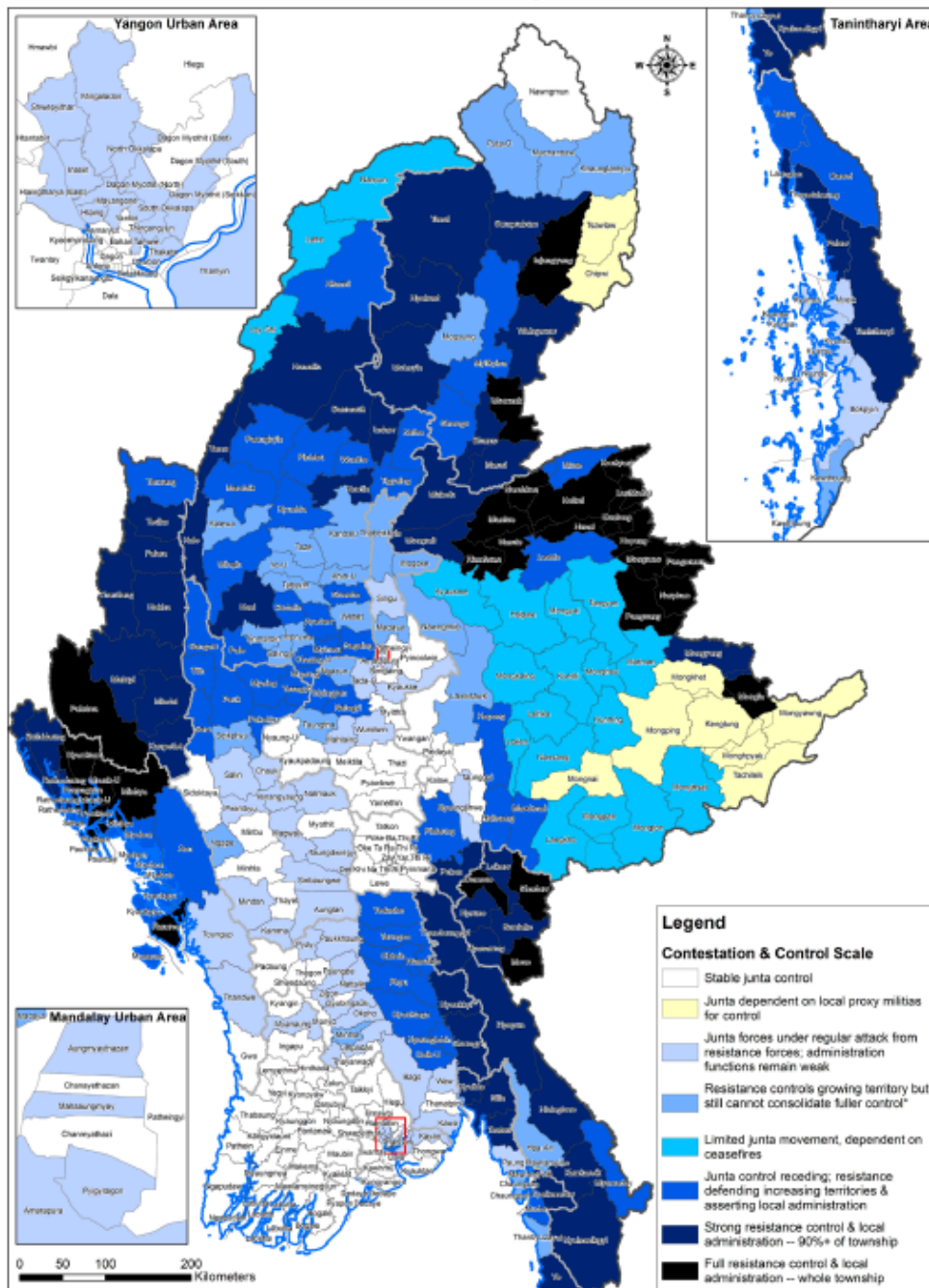
No.	Party Name	Received Seats in 2020 Federal Election
1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Yes
2	Myanmar People's Democratic Party	No
3	Kachin National Democratic Party	No
4	Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party	No
5	National Unity Party	No
6	Arakan Front Party (AFP)	Yes
7	Tai-Leng Nationalities Development Party (TNDP)	No
8	Shan-Ni Solidarity Party (SSP)	No
9	Rakhine State National Force Party	No
10	Pa-O National Organization (PNO) Party	Yes
11	Lisu National Development Party (LNDP)	No
12	Kaman National Development Party	No
13	Akha National Development Party	No
14	Inn National League Party	No
15	Kokang Democracy and Unity Party (KDUP)	No
16	Karen National Democratic Party	No
17	Karen People's Party (KPP)	No
18	Naga National Party (NNP)	No
19	Danu National Democracy Party	No
20	People's Pioneer Party	No
21	Democratic Party of National Politics (DNP)	No
22	National Political Alliances League Party	No
23	Federal Democratic Party	No
24	People's Workers Party	No
25	Myanmar Farmers' Development Party	No

No.	Party Name	Received Seats in 2020 Federal Election
26	Shan and Ethnic Democratic Party (White Tiger Party)	No
27	Democratic Party	No
28	Democratic Forces Labour Party	No
29	Women's Party (Mon)	No
30	Mro National Development Party	No
31	New National Democracy Party	No
32	National Interest Development Party (NIDP)	No
33	Wa National Party	Yes
34	Khumi National Party	No
35	New National Political Vigor Party	No
36	United Nationalities Democracy Party	No
37	Union Peace and Unity Party	No
38	Myanmar Peasant Workers' Party	No
39	Modern People's Party	No
40	Labour Party	No
41	National Democratic Force (NDF)	No
42	88 Generation Students (Union of Myanmar) Party	No
43	Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics Party	No
44	The Party for the People	No
45	People's Party	No
46	Mon Progressive Party	No
47	Peace Party	No
48	Diversity and Peace Party	No
49	Kachin State People's Party (KSPP)	Yes
50	Mon Unity Party (MUP)	Yes
51	Union Farmer-Labour Force Party	No
52	Socioeconomic Promotion Party	No
53	Unity and Development Party	No

No.	Party Name	Recieved Seats in 2020 Federal Election
54	Kayah State People's Party	No

Source: [Myanmar Union Election Commission Registered Party List](#) (June 25, 2025)

FIGURE 1: Map of Myanmar Junta Control



Visual: Areas on the map in **White and Yellow** Represent Junta or Proxy Control whereas **Blue and Black** Represent Areas of Receding Control and Resistance Control.

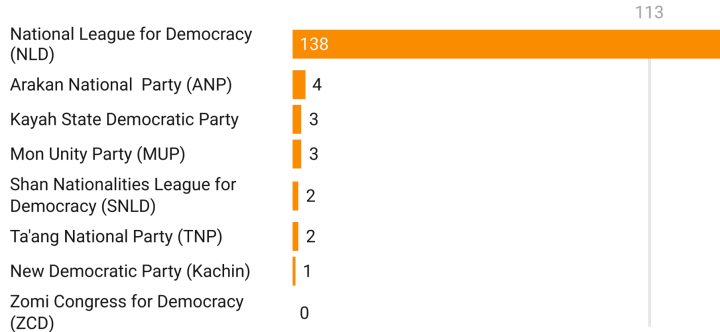
Source: [Special Advisory Council on Myanmar Update 2024](#)

FIGURE 2: Seats won in the 2020 Myanmar House of Nationalities (Upper House) and House of Representatives Federally

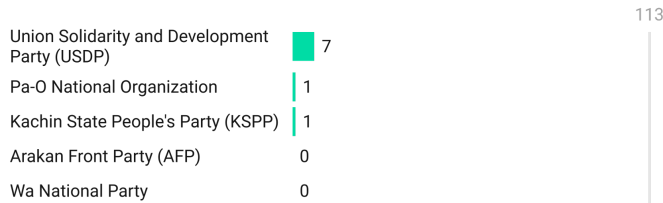
Seats won in the 2020 Myanmar House of Nationalities and Participation in 2025 Elections

113 seats required for a majority

Not Participating in 2025 Elections



Participating in 2025 Election



NA

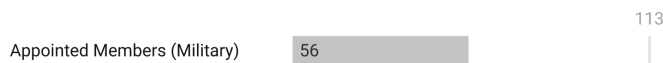
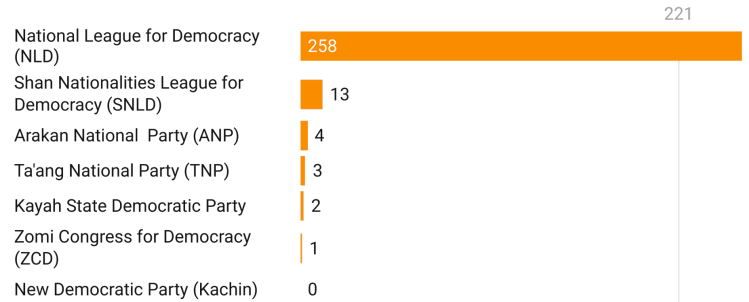


Chart: Created by Napas Thein • Source: Walker, Nigel, Briefing Paper: Myanmar: 2020 Parliamentary Elections, 4 February 2021. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9127/>, Myanmar Union Election Commission Registered Party List (as of September 27, 2024) • Created with Datawrapper

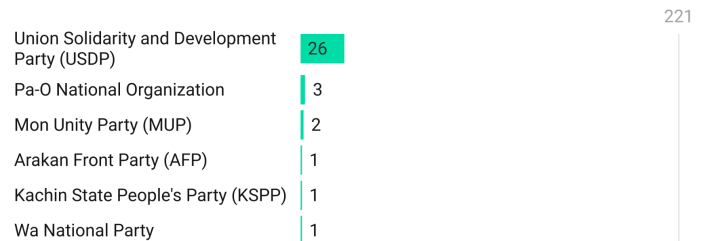
Seats won in the 2020 Myanmar House of Representatives and Participation in 2025

221 seats required for a majority

Not Participating in 2025 Elections



Participating in 2025 Elections



NA



Chart: Created by Napas Thein • Source: Walker, Nigel, Briefing Paper: Myanmar: 2020 Parliamentary Elections, 4 February 2021. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9127/>, Myanmar Union Election Commission Registered Party List (as of September 27, 2024) • Created with Datawrapper