



Data for Myanmar

Crackdown on Digital Rights: Online Expression in the Face of Oppression in Myanmar

Report No. 36 | September 2026

This report is intended to assist policymakers and interested groups both within and outside Myanmar. The data covers the period from February 1, 2022, to August 31, 2026.

Key Messages

- Over the five years since the military coup, 2,029 individuals have been arrested for their online expression on social media or digital platforms opposing the Myanmar military and supporting pro-democracy movements or resistance groups.
- In 2022, when the arrests began, 874 individuals were detained. Compared to that initial year, the annual number of arrests has steadily declined.
- Online users were arrested across 227 townships, with the majority from Yangon and Mandalay regions.
- In 2026, the scope of these arrests expanded to target individuals who simply commented on or shared dissenting political opinions, rather than being limited to those deemed direct security threats.



Key Figures

2,029

Total Number of
Arrests

26

Total Number of
Arrests in 2026

969

Total Number of
Arrests in Yangon and
Mandalay Regions

35%

Percentage of
Women in Total
Arrests

1. Background

Following the military coup, the Myanmar military has made numerous efforts to control key social networks and online platforms critical to pro-democracy movements. These efforts include internet shutdowns, blocking websites, and restricting access to popular platforms like Facebook to prevent public use.

On January 25, 2022, the State Administrative Council (SAC) announced that anyone inciting, spreading propaganda, or making threats on social networks could be prosecuted under various laws, including Section 52(a) of the Anti-Terrorism Law, Section 124-A and Section 505-A of the Penal Code, and Section 33(a) of the Electronic Communications Act. The Myanmar military also used state-run media to warn the public against playing "PDF Games" (games supporting resistance groups) and engaging in hate speech. Arrests related to online activities began in February 2022.

The military not only monitors online posts but also conducts physical checks at security checkpoints, inspecting phones and arresting individuals based on their online content. Pro-military Telegram channels have also been used to gather and share personal information, pressuring and facilitating the arrests of online users for their posts.

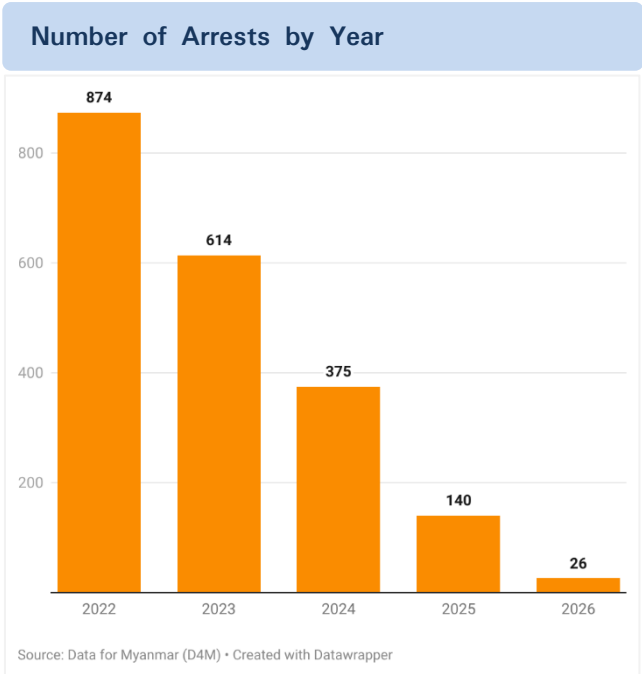
Initially, the focus was mainly on content posted on Facebook, the most widely used social media platform. However, by 2023 and 2024, the military expanded its surveillance to include

TikTok content. Among those arrested were high-profile figures such as artists, actors, and journalists. These arrests are regularly reported in daily news and pro-military media outlets.

2. Analysis

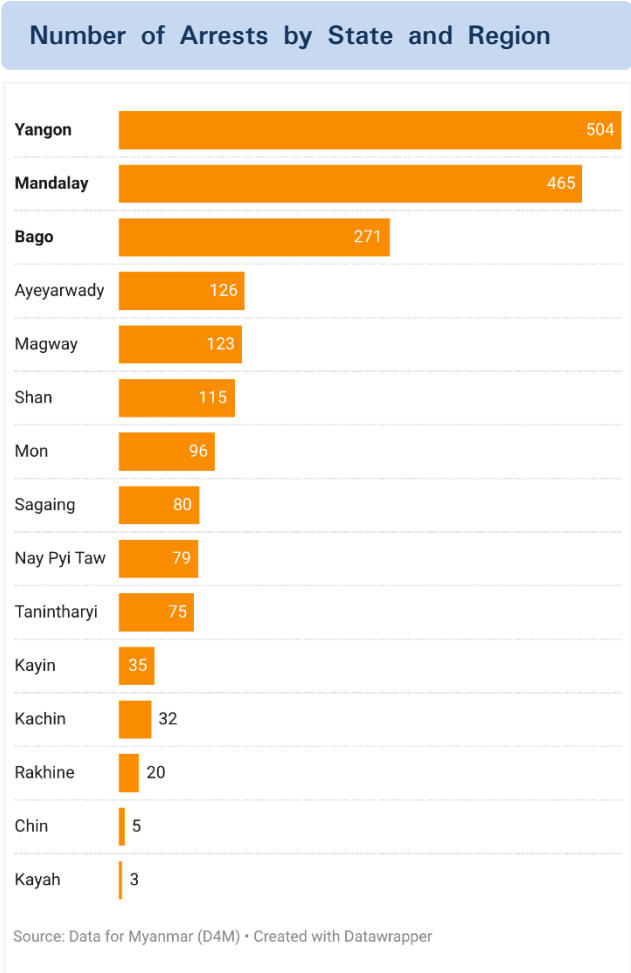
Over the five years since the military coup, 2,029 people have been arrested due to their online expression on social media or online communications opposing the Myanmar military and supporting pro-democracy movements and resistance groups.

Analyzing the annual breakdown of arrests reveals that 874 individuals were detained in 2022, 614 in 2023, 375 in 2024, 140 in 2025, and 26 in 2026 (as of the end of August).



In 2022, the year the arrests began, 874 individuals were taken into custody. Compared to that initial year, the annual number of arrests has steadily declined.

A geographic breakdown by state and region indicates that Yangon and Mandalay recorded the highest number of arrests, with 504 and 465 individuals detained, respectively. Furthermore, Bago, Magway, and Ayeyarwady Regions, as well as Shan State, each reported over 100 arrests.

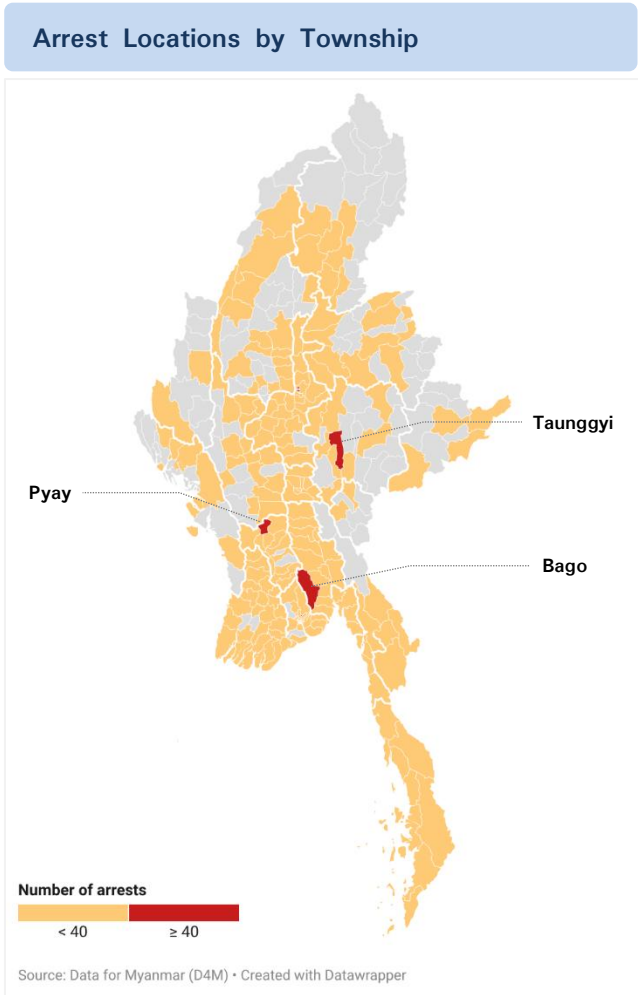


At the township level, arrests have been documented across 227 townships nationwide over the more than five years since the military coup. Townships recording 40 or more arrests include Bago (97), Chanmyathazi (62), Pyay (48), North Okkalapa (48), Aungmyethazan (43), Maharaungmyay (43), and Taunggyi (41).

Regarding arrests by gender, 668 women and 1,216 men have been detained.

A breakdown by social media platform reveals that 1,847 individuals were arrested for posting and sharing content on Facebook. Additionally, 151 individuals were arrested for their activity on TikTok, alongside five Telegram users and three Viber users. The remaining 23 individuals were detained for sharing content across multiple platforms simultaneously, including Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, Viber, and YouTube.

In 2026, there was a notable expansion in the scope of arrests, targeting individuals who merely shared or commented on dissenting political views rather than actions constituting direct security threats.



For instance, military authorities arrested a man from Hlaingthaya Township for sharing a video that compared the ongoing floods in Laymyethna Township, Ayeyarwady Region, with the 2015 Bago floods to highlight the contrasting disaster responses of the two respective governments. Additionally, a woman from Taunggyi Township was detained for posting a comment on a Facebook page in response to "Kumudra Under the Moonlight," a song dedicated to honoring Min Aung Hlaing.

3. Recommendations

- Relevant organizations should protect individuals' rights to freedom of expression and safeguard their personal data.
- Online users should avoid sharing hate speech related to ethnicity or religion, as well as content that could harm or endanger civilians.
- Online users should take precautions to ensure their personal information remains secure when using digital platforms.
- Before traveling, online users should carefully prepare security measures to protect their personal data and ensure their safety.

4. Methodology and Limitations

The data in this report was compiled by reviewing and verifying information published on the official website and media outlets¹ of the

Myanmar military's Ministry of Information². Duplicate cases of individuals with identical names, addresses, or dates have been counted only once. Arrested individuals whose names remain unverified (under review) have been excluded from the count.

Individuals arrested under the Election Protection Law during the 2025 election period are not included in this count.

Regarding the arrested individuals, Data for Myanmar does not have detailed information on how the military continues to prosecute them, whether they have been released, or their current status.

5. About Us

Data for Myanmar (D4M) is an independent research organization that provides useful data for the people in Myanmar after collecting and analyzing data from various sources.

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¹ <https://www.mdn.gov.mm/newspaper/public/>

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