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The Law No One Dares to Challenge

During the regular sessions of the Third *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives), lawmakers raised at least 495 questions with the Min Aung Hlaing administration. Only three addressed the Conscription Law. In the *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities) and the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* (Union Parliament), the law was not raised or debated at all.

The Law No One Dares to Challenge

Events

From March to October 2026, only three questions regarding conscription were asked during the regular sessions of the *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives). In the State and Regional *Hluttaws*—specifically Mandalay, Magway, and Bago Regions, as well as Mon and Shan States—only five questions were submitted, one question per regional parliament. In the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* (Union Parliament) and the *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities), no discussion took place whatsoever. The parliamentary bodies have maintained silence regarding the conscription crisis that has plunged the public into deep distress [See ISP-DM2026-062 & 063].

Preliminary Analysis

From February 2024 to October 2026, recruitment under the People's Military Service Law reached its 29th batch. According to estimates by the Myanmar Defense and Security Institute (MDSI), the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) recruited an average of more than 4,700 people per batch, bringing the cumulative number of conscripts to over 136,300 by Batch 29. Before the law was activated, the MAF could recruit an average of just 7,200 personnel a year across its battalions, divisions and regional military commands. This figure excludes graduates of the Defense Services Academy (DSA) and Officer Training School (OTS). Annual recruitment has since exceeded 56,400, nearly eight times the previous average. This figure, too, excludes DSA and OTS graduates [See ISP-DM2026-064].

The sharp rise in recruitment has been driven by coercive practices among conscription bodies at every level of administration, which have resorted to forced enlistment at the grassroots to meet their quotas. These include patrols in civilian vehicles to arrest young people from city streets, as well as organized human trafficking rings that draft individuals into military service. In their efforts to fill recruitment quotas, authorities have cast their net ever wider, detaining and forcing even people without proper identity documents into military service. The Ministry of Immigration and Population has had to verify recruits' identity documents and birth certificates retrospectively, after they arrive at military training depots. The authorities have consequently urged officials to screen recruits' documents before enlistment. Such practices have kept the public in a state of constant fear, yet the issue has barely surfaced in the *Hluttaw*, whose motto claims: "The People's Voice is the *Hluttaw's* Voice; The People's Will is the *Hluttaw's* Will."

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Only Three Inquiries on Conscription in the *Pyithu Hluttaw*

In the *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives), there were only three inquiries by Members of Parliament regarding the People's Military Service issue. In the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* (Union Parliament) and *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities), no inquiries or deliberations took place whatsoever.

Question (1) I July 22, 2026

Gon Wam
MP for Hkamti Constituency, (Naga National Party)



Pointed out that administrative bodies in Hkamti Township were using conscription as a pretext to arbitrarily and unlawfully arrest students, patient caregivers, and travelers, causing widespread fear and anxiety among the public. Stated that unlawful arrests exceeding prescribed quotas violate citizens' fundamental rights and erode public trust in the government. Inquired how authorities plan to rein in these extra-legal practices and ensure that conscription summonses strictly adhere to laws and bylaws so that the public may live free from dread.

Question (2) I September 24, 2026

Nyan Win Htike
MP for Botahtaung Constituency, (Union Solidarity and Development Party)



Inquired whether there are plans to conduct public awareness campaigns to reduce panic-driven draft evasion caused by a lack of understanding of the law and operational missteps by grassroots administrative teams.

Question (3) I October 2, 2026

Tint Wai
MP for Dagon Myothit (North) Constituency, (Union Solidarity and Development Party)



Inquired about the state's arrangements and plans to assist individuals who have completed their military service terms in securing domestic and overseas employment.

Data from March 16, 2026 to October 28, 2026, is based entirely on open-source data. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability.

Five Inquiries on Conscription in State and Regional *Hluttaws*

While inquiries and deliberations on the People's Military Service were completely absent in the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* (Union Parliament) and *Amyotha Hluttaw* (House of Nationalities), five inquiries were raised across State and Regional *Hluttaws*.

Question (1) I June 4, 2026

Kyaw Swar Linn
Bago Region *Hluttaw*, MP for Paukkhaung Constituency, (Federal Democratic Party)



Pointed out that lower administrative tiers in Bago Region were extorting money under the pretext of military service and arbitrarily arresting youths, causing public distress and resulting in local labor shortages. Highlighted that regional development requires public trust and inquired whether plans exist to ensure conscription procedures strictly adhere to legal frameworks from the grassroots.

Question (2) I June 10, 2026

Ko Ko Htwe
Mandalay Region *Hluttaw*, MP for Chanayethazan Constituency, (Union Solidarity and Development Party)



Reported that armed groups operating under the name of local militias in Mandalay were unlawfully capturing youths, threatening community security. Argued that to prevent administrative disruption, such groups should either be dissolved or integrated into official community security setups with their weapons confiscated. Noted that some individuals joined these militias specifically to evade conscription and were forcibly abducting other youths, asking whether plans exist to supervise, inspect, and rein in these disorderly actions.

Question (3) I June 11, 2026

Aung Naing Linn
Magway Region *Hluttaw*, MP for Ngape Constituency, (Union Solidarity and Development Party)



Inquired whether measures would be implemented to legally halt the practice of intercepting and conscripting traveling youths along transit routes instead of issuing formal summonses.

Question (4) I June 19, 2026

Thant Zaw
Mon State *Hluttaw*, Kyaikmaraw Constituency, (National Interest Development Party)



Inquired whether investigations and punitive actions would be taken against individuals and syndicates profiteering under the cover of the conscription law, and whether enforcement would adhere strictly to bylaws to foster public confidence and compliance.

Question (5) I August 13, 2026

Htay Win Hlaing
Shan State *Hluttaw*, Kutkai Constituency, (Union Solidarity and Development Party)

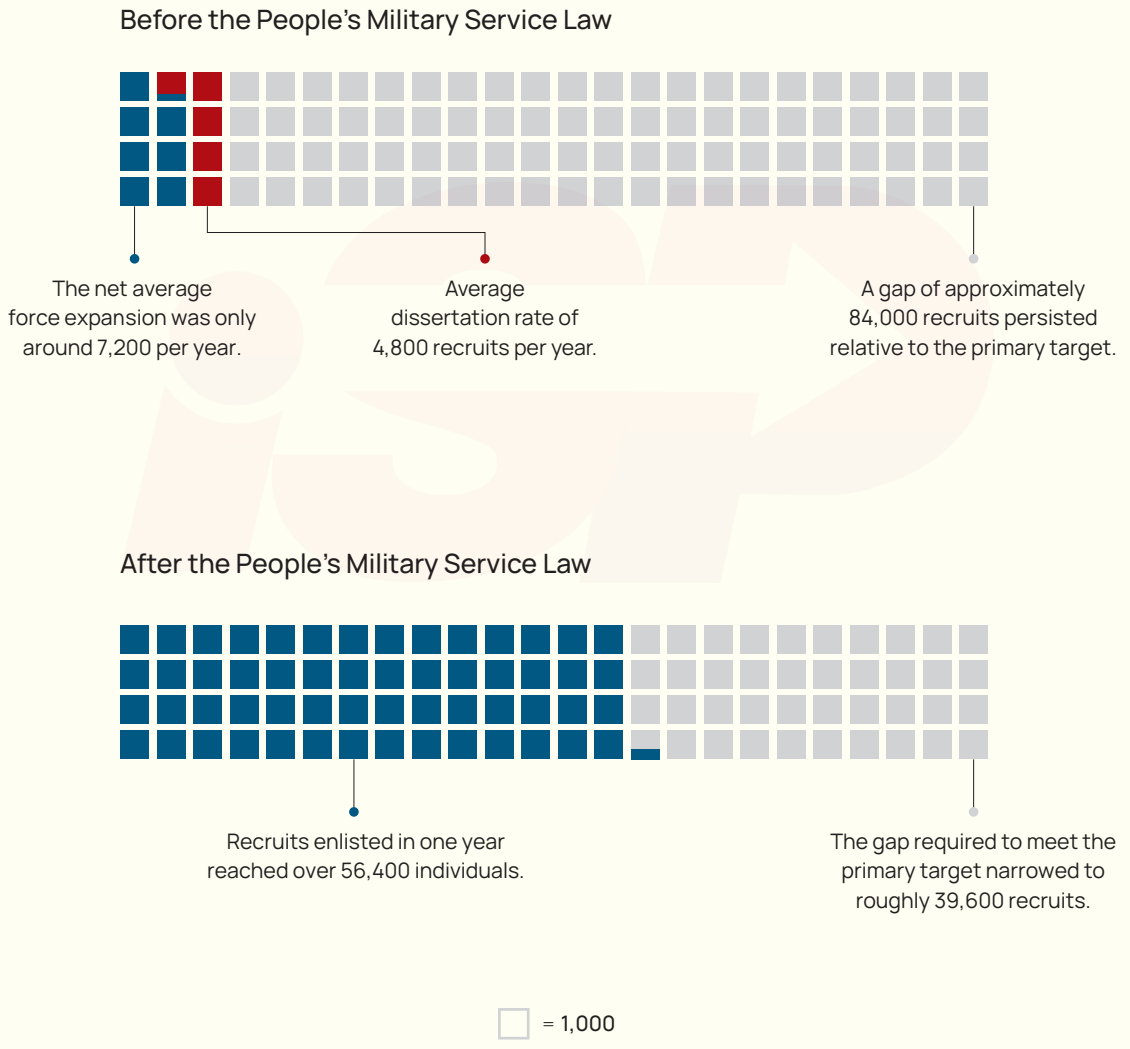


Discussed extortion by ten-household heads, hundred-household heads, and ward/village administrators during land transactions and conscription procedures, as well as collecting illicit payments to tolerate unauthorized businesses.

Data from March 20, 2026 to October 28, 2026, is based entirely on open-source data. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability.

An Eightfold Surge in Military Recruitment

Following the expansion of the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) in the 1990s, an initial objective was set to recruit **10** personnel per battalion each month, or **8,000** monthly across all battalions, totaling an annual target of **96,000 new recruits**. However, between the years 2000 and 2020, actual enlistment averaged only about **7,200 recruits** per year. Following the enactment of the People's Military Service Law, **over 56,400 recruits** were enlisted within a single year, marking an increase of **nearly eightfold**.



Data as of October 19, 2026, is part of research conducted by ISP-Myanmar and based on reports by the Myanmar Defense and Security Institute (MDSI) and on open-source data. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability. These intake figures exclude graduates from the Defense Services Academy (DSA), Officer Training School (OTS), and Officer Training Corps (OTC).

During the regular sessions of the Third *Pyithu Hluttaw* (House of Representatives), at least 495 questions had been put to the Min Aung Hlaing administration by October 28, 2026. Just three concerned the Conscription Law. The first was raised by Gon Wam, MP for Hkamti Constituency from the Naga National Party. He called for measures to curb arbitrary arrests, forced portering and extortion carried out under the pretext of the People's Military Service Law. Another inquiry came from Nyan Win Htike, a Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) MP representing Botahtaung Constituency. He argued that conscription should apply to everyone who met the eligibility criteria, regardless of social standing, including celebrities and the children of military leaders. Neither inquiry called for the suspension of a law that had become a source of widespread public fear. Instead, they focused on curbing abuses in its enforcement and ensuring that the obligation to serve was applied equally, irrespective of status.

Questions about the People's Military Service Law surfaced in State and Regional *Hluttaws* before they reached the *Pyithu Hluttaw*. The first was raised in the Bago Region *Hluttaw* by Kyaw Swar Linn, a regional MP representing Paukkhaung Constituency for the Federal Democratic Party. He sought legal oversight of several abuses carried out under the guise of conscription: village militia groups demanding 20,000–35,000 kyats from young men as "military service fees"; arbitrary arrests in Pyay's urban wards, with release conditional on payments of up to 5M kyats; and detentions conducted under the pretext of guest-registration inspections. Bago Region's Minister of Security and Border Affairs, Colonel Nyi Lan Cho, offered little beyond assurances that the authorities were acting in accordance with existing laws and bylaws. Similar questions about unlawful detention and extortion were raised in the Magway Region, Mon State and Shan State *Hluttaws*. The responses were much the same: relevant ministers maintained that procedures would be carried out in accordance with the law.

Debate in the Mandalay Region *Hluttaw* was particularly contentious. A heated exchange broke out between Ko Ko Htwe, a USDP regional MP representing Chanayethazan Constituency, and Colonel Nay Linn Soe, the Region's Minister of Security and Border Affairs, who was responding to his inquiry. In a follow-up question, Ko Ko Htwe pointed to a perverse consequence of conscription: some people had joined local militias to evade being drafted, only to become recruiters themselves. Colonel Nay Linn Soe advised that complaints supported by evidence should be submitted to the Central Regional Military Command or the relevant local commanders. Ko Ko Htwe countered that such reporting was often impossible. Authorities confiscated mobile phones and other communication devices upon detaining people, he said, meaning that families sometimes learned of an abduction only ten days later. He also alleged that an illicit trafficking network had emerged, abducting young people in urban centres and selling them to recruiters in

rural areas. The *Hluttaw* Speaker intervened with a response that did little to address the practical difficulties: cases known immediately should be reported immediately, while those discovered later should be reported later.

In responding to questions about conscription, Deputy Defence Minister Major-General Min Thu and Mandalay Region Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Nay Linn Soe invoked the restoration of civil-military relations and every citizen's duty to defend the State. Their statements offered little indication that implementation of the People's Military Service Law would be suspended. Major-General Min Thu went further, saying that the details of eligible individuals who failed to report when summoned would be circulated to security checkpoints at town entrances and exits, as well as ward and village administration offices, to facilitate their arrest.

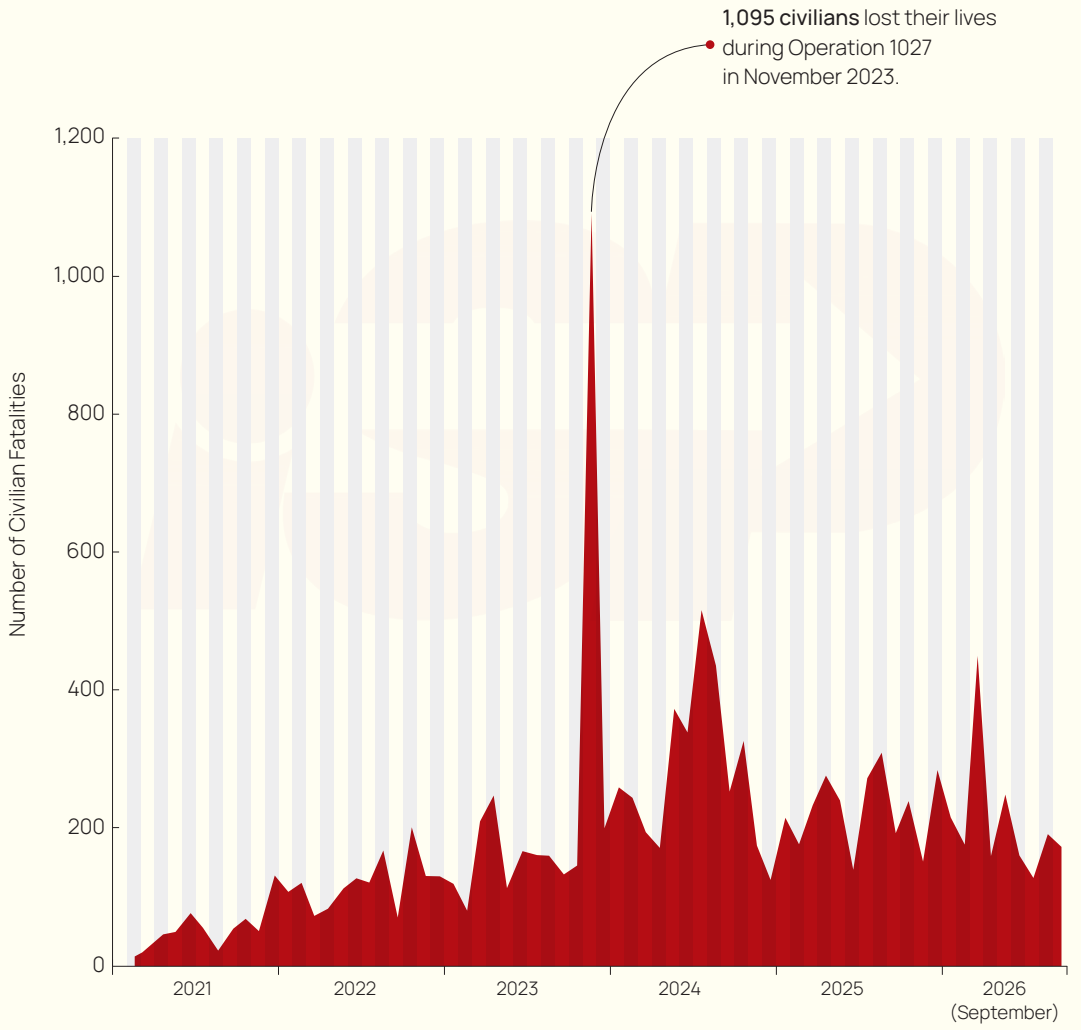
Scenario Forecast

Even during the election period, political parties, including the USDP, rarely criticised the People's Military Service Law. Parliamentary scrutiny of the law has likewise remained exceptionally limited.
The Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) shows no sign of suspending conscription, which remains central to its efforts to rebuild troop strength. Recruitment is therefore likely to intensify, using a range of methods across major cities and rural areas, including those beyond active conflict zones. As ISP-Myanmar noted in its OnPoint analysis published on February 16, 2024, the most severe consequence of activating the law has been the widespread human rights violations associated with its implementation. Forced recruitment has since become increasingly brazen, even in major urban centres. It has also opened the door to corruption at every level of administration, from the grassroots upwards, while shifting the burden of conscription onto society at large. Meanwhile, the exodus of migrant workers to neighbouring countries continues unabated [See ISP OnPoint No. 20, PANDEMONIUM: The Conscription Law and Five Negative Potential Consequences].

Being compelled to spend at least two years of one's youth in military service against one's will carries a steep opportunity cost. Promises that those who complete their service will receive priority in employment cannot compensate for years lost. For those who die after being forcibly conscripted, the loss is immeasurable. In countries where military service is compulsory, defending one's homeland may give meaning to such sacrifices. But forcing people into service not to defend their country, but to fight and kill their fellow citizens, exacts a profoundly different and unacceptable price. From the military coup to September 30, 2026, at least 12,893 civilians were killed in armed conflict. Another 2,183 died during the early post-coup crackdown, either in violent dispersals of anti-dictatorship protests or in interrogation centres following arrest [See ISP-DM2026-065]. These figures capture only part of the visible human toll;

Over 12,800 Civilians Killed in Myanmar's Post-Coup Armed Conflicts

From February 2021 to September 2026, **at least 12,893 civilians** were killed nationwide in armed clashes and conflict-related incidents. In addition, during the early post-coup period, **at least 2,183 civilians*** were killed in incidents involving violent crackdowns on anti-military dictatorship protests and deaths in interrogation centers following arrest and detention.



Data, from February 1, 2026 to September 30, 2026, is part of research conducted by ISP-Myanmar and is based entirely on open-source data. It may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability. (*) Figures showing civilian fatalities resulting from crackdowns by authorities during protests are based on data compiled by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and are not included in the chart.

the actual losses are far greater. The introduction of the People's Military Service Law has added another layer of suffering, with families bearing much of the cost of forced recruitment and its consequences. The damage extends well beyond individual lives and households. When a regime chooses policies primarily to preserve its grip on power, the country pays in foregone development, lost productivity and years of economic and social progress. The result is a cycle of decline that could burden generations to come.

Parliament has so far done little to challenge this trajectory. Whether the legislative bodies have either the capacity or the political will to hold the military and government accountable for a conscription crisis that has alarmed the public remains an open question. Elections have been held and parliamentary sessions convened in an effort to project the image of civilian democratic governance. Yet, without even basic deliberation on a crisis affecting the lives and futures of ordinary people, the *Hluttaw* risks becoming increasingly detached from the public it claims to represent. That distance, left unaddressed, will only deepen the divide between the people and their parliament. ■