



Thabyay: Creative Resistance in Myanmar

THE FILM: What happens when non-violent leaders are pushed to support armed struggle against a brutal regime in a forgotten war? *Thabyay: Creative Resistance in Myanmar* dramatically explores this question. After a military coup crushes democratic change in Myanmar and plunges the country into civil war, two peace activists choose different paths in their attempts to end dictatorship. Maung Saungkha—a poet—takes up arms in the jungle while Thet Swe Win—a community organizer—relocates to a border town in Thailand to amplify the anti-fascist revolution through political organizing. During cross-border forays into conflict areas, our team has captured unrivaled footage illustrating the daily challenges faced by both men.

Along the way, we learn just how critical their work is.

The worsening crisis in Myanmar has slid out of the world's headlines precisely at the time when attention is needed most. Facing daily atrocities at the hands of a military unhinged to attack any civilians who stand in their way, the Burmese people urgently need someone to tell their story. Into this breach steps the film makers of Thabyay. Telling those stories is critically important, and deserves to be supported.

Phil Robertson, Deputy Director, Asia Division,
Human Rights Watch

So far this year (Jan-Jun 2023), the civilians killed by the junta's airstrikes in Burma/Myanmar were more than double the civilians killed in airstrikes in Ukraine. This conflict—a face off between civilians who refuse to give up the freedoms they gained during the transition period and a brutal military junta willing to commit atrocities against people—needs your attention NOW.

Debbie Stothard, Coordinator/Founder, ALTSEAN
Past Secretary-General of International Federation for Human Rights)

Thabyay is timely and poignant. In the 1970s and 80s, we saw the terrible effects of years and decades of military rule in Latin America. But the heroism of local human rights activists brought democracy back. This documentary highlights the bravery of Burmese activists at a crucial time in Myanmar's history.

Eric Stover, Faculty Director, Human Rights Center,
University of California, Berkeley School of Law

WHY THIS FILM: Myanmar's political crisis has faded from the headlines. This David versus Goliath revolution between pro-democracy forces using outdated weapons and hand-made drones against a military deploying Russian jet fighters and heavy artillery against civilians has swept the country.

Since the military coup in 2021, 1.4 million refugees have been internally displaced by conflict, 6400 political prisoners are currently detained, and tens of thousands of villages have been torched by junta soldiers.

The same junta charged with genocide against the Rohingya is committing war crimes with impunity. For the first time, the country is united in seeing that the military, which many believed was the nation's paternal protector, has divided its people with racist propaganda, attempted to exterminate the Rohingya, and oppressed ethnic nationalities.

The majority Burmans have awoken and have aligned themselves with ethnic armies to fight a revolution they believe will finally oust one of the world's most brutal regimes. With no international support, the ingenuity of Myanmar's people to redirect history from half a century of horror and fear to a future built on peace and justice, is a story that must be told.

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IMPACT: Our films portray human rights defenders working at great risk to build just societies. Kirana films are created to spark informed discussion and to give a platform for human rights defenders to speak at screening events around the world.

ADVOCACY SCREENINGS: Kirana has an established network with international organizations involved with human rights and Myanmar issues that screen our films at events with panel discussions hosting renowned human rights defenders, academics and experts. Our films have been screened at the United Nations headquarters and the US Capitol.

UNIVERSITY SPEAKING TOURS: Kirana has organized national screening tours with renowned Myanmar human rights leaders. Our films have been presented at Stanford, Columbia, George Washington, Johns Hopkins, University of Washington, UC Berkeley, Harvard, and Tufts.

DISTRIBUTION: Our films reach institutions and educational audiences through our distributor, Documentary Educational Resources and are available on Kanopy. *Padauk: Myanmar Spring* was selected for the Best of 2022 by Video Librarian.

FILM FESTIVALS: Kirana Films have been screened in festivals in the US, Europe, and Asia and have garnered awards at many.

ALSO BY KIRANA PRODUCTIONS

He Had Wings (2022)
Padauk: Myanmar Spring (2021)
Mother, Daughter, Sister (2018)
Sittwe (2017)
This Kind of Love (2015)
Into the Current: Burma's Political Prisoners (2012)
Mercy / Meddah (2004)
Burma Diary (1997)



FROM THE DIRECTOR

"I use filmmaking to transform the compassion viewers feel for characters in our stories into action in support of human rights.

"I've been entrusted with stories from refugees hiding in the jungle, teenage survivors of rape by junta soldiers, and former political prisoners who endured torture. Their stories bear witness to suffering, but our films also show the resilient activists working to bring justice, peace and democracy to their country.

"*Padauk: Myanmar Spring* was released shortly after the junta seized power in a coup and crushed hopes for democratic transition to end the military rule that has destroyed Myanmar for half a century.

"*Thabyay: Creative Resistance in Myanmar* continues that story in a country now thrust into civil war in which civilians are targeted in horrific human rights abuses that must be exposed. Our films are made to amplify the voices of political activists and human rights defenders working for peace, justice and freedom in war the world has forgotten."

-- Jeanne Hallacy