

# FIFA and the Myanmar junta: footballs and bombs

While the World Cup is presented as a time of collective joy, Myanmar fans will have to pay and hand over their personal data to their oppressors in order to watch it legally. FIFA has granted exclusive broadcasting rights for the World Cup in Myanmar to MyTel channel TV360, a telecommunications company partly owned by the military through the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).



Army chief Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing (center) attends Mytel's launch at the Pullman Yangon Centerpoint Hotel in Yangon on Saturday. / Snr-Gen Min Aung

Hlaing / Facebook

## MEC & MyTel: a significant source of income for the junta

MEC is under [multiple international sanctions](#) since 2021, including from the United States, the European Union, and Switzerland, where FIFA is based. The Swiss authorities consider, that “MEC and its subsidiaries generate revenue for the Tatmadaw, therefore **contributing to its capabilities to carry out activities undermining democracy and the rule of law and to serious human rights violations in Myanmar/Burma**”

Telecom International Myanmar Company Limited, better known as MyTel, is the telecommunications subsidiary of MEC, which is jointly owned with Viettel, a Vietnamese operator that is also controlled by the military. According to the organisation [Justice for Myanmar](#), MyTel's profit forecasts indicate that the Myanmar military's stake could yield US\$270 million during

MyTel's first five years of operation, followed by a further US\$450 million over the subsequent five years. **These revenues will undoubtedly be boosted by the exclusive broadcasting rights for the World Cup in Myanmar granted by FIFA.**

MyTel is also being targeted by restrictive measures [-the entity list-](#) imposed by the US Department of Commerce in its own right, not only because of its financial support for the military regime, but also because of the **surveillance services** it has provided to the regime, *“enabling the regime to carry out human rights abuses through the tracking and identification of target individuals and groups”*.

## MyTel implication in human rights violations

MyTel's complicity in the crimes of the Myanmar junta goes beyond financial support.

In 2018, MyTel ran a campaign entitled “Banner of Victory”, overseen by MyTel's CEO, Colonel Nguyen Thanh Nam, to recruit subscribers within the army, targeting senior officers in particular. According to information obtained by [Justice For Myanmar](#), each phone number was personalised with the soldiers' service numbers and the prefix **“696” in support of extremist Buddhist nationalists**. Many soldiers were reportedly forced to subscribe to Mytel, with subscription fees deducted from their pay. This aggressive campaign then continued, specifically targeting “VIPs” – members of the government and elected officials. However, according to the same investigation, the **Myanmar army's signals directorate is operationally linked to Mytel, and the mobile network uses the army's fibre-optic cable network, with its towers located within military bases.**

**A surveillance network** that has expanded since the coup, notably involving a police cybersecurity team working with MyTel to monitor mobile phone users in real time, as well as to identify and track opponents of the regime online, as [revealed in 2021 by Frontier](#). In July 2021, [the junta ordered all operators to install interception devices enabling them to monitor calls, messages and internet traffic, as well as to track users' locations.](#)

*“The military is most interested in accessing the user data of potential political opponents, resistance members and journalists as part of its broader effort to squash dissent, analysts believe.” - VOA | [How Myanmar's Junta Uses Telecom Companies to Target Journalists](#)*

According to information received by [Burma Campaign UK](#), **Mytel is also believed to be facilitating internet connections for scam centres in Myanmar**. These “centres” are involved in financing the junta and its militias, as well as organ and human trafficking. [According to the UN](#), hundreds of thousands of people, victims of human trafficking, are held there and forced to scam internet users all over the world.

## FIFA and the Myanmar junta

FIFA has not only trampled on the democratic aspirations of the Myanmar people and forced their football fans to pay and hand over their personal data to the junta in order to watch the World Cup – despite the numerous risks to their safety – but it has also honoured one of the military's fervent supporters by appointing him as [chairperson of the Football Social Responsibility Committee!](#)

The appointment of Mr Zaw Zaw, president of the Myanmar Football Federation and, more importantly, owner of **Max Myanmar**, has not gone unnoticed by the propaganda press. The infamous crony and his company have **publicly supported the junta's genocidal campaigns against the Rohingya minority** – as well as MyTel and Mr Zaw Zaw, in a personal capacity, through donations.

This involvement is documented in the 2019 [report by the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#), which examines the economic interests of the Myanmar military and concludes that:

*“Max Myanmar should be criminally investigated and, if appropriate, prosecuted for making a substantial and direct contribution to the commission of the crime against humanity of “other inhumane acts” and persecution as outlined above in the applicable legal framework on business officials and criminal liability.”*

*“the Mission concludes on reasonable grounds that officials from KBZ Group and Max Myanmar aided, abetted, or otherwise assisted in the crimes against humanity of persecution and other inhumane acts.”*

## FIFA names U Zaw Zaw Chair of Social Responsibility Committee

October 09, 2025 Global New Light of Myanmar 821



U Zaw Zaw, newly appointed Chair of the FIFA Football Social Responsibility Committee, is seen together with FIFA President Gianni Infantino. PHOTO: MFF

Yet FIFA has committed itself to upholding human rights through Article 3 of its statutes and states that it “[embraces its responsibility to respect human rights across its operations and relationships](#)”; the words are there, but the actions are lacking.

Despite the fact that the relationship between MyTel and the Myanmar military is well-known and well-documented, as are the junta's numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, FIFA has – quite clearly – chosen to view this bloody military cartel, which is subject to numerous international sanctions, as a partner of choice.

## We call on:

- Football fans and human rights supporters

to **share** this information and **tag** @fifa @fifaworldcup @gianni\_infantino on social media

to **show their support and solidarity** with the Myanmar people's struggle for freedom

to **massively report this situation via the [FIFA reporting portal](#)**, selecting the 'Human Rights' section, or via the email address: [humanrightscomplaint@fifa.org](mailto:humanrightscomplaint@fifa.org)

- FIFA

to immediately **terminate its broadcasting contract with MyTel**

to immediately **remove Mr Zaw Zaw from all his positions within FIFA**

to thoroughly **screen all its Myanmar partners or those with links to Myanmar**

to **establish a clear and public protocol** for vetting the backgrounds of these partners and committee members

to **apologise to the Myanmar people**

- The Swiss, European and US authorities

to review the **financial arrangements for the World Cup broadcasting contract in Myanmar in light of the current sanctions**

to **put pressure on FIFA** to sever all ties with the Myanmar junta