

Teaching Justice Under Authoritarian Rule and Ongoing Armed Conflict: Practice-Based Reflections from Myanmar

Aung Kyaw Oo

Abstract

Transitional justice is commonly conceptualized as a set of mechanisms implemented after periods of authoritarian rule or armed conflict. In Myanmar, however, authoritarian governance and widespread armed conflict persist simultaneously, while serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law remain ongoing. Despite the absence of political transition, civil society actors and human rights educators continue to engage communities in discussions of justice, accountability, and non-recurrence. Much of this engagement takes place through online training due to security risks, displacement, and restricted access. This study examines transitional justice education as a present and adaptive practice carried out under conditions of ongoing authoritarian rule and armed conflict rather than as a future institutional project. It asks: what recurring practical and ethical challenges arise when teaching transitional justice concepts through human rights education and international legal frameworks in predominantly online training settings under ongoing conflict in Myanmar. It further explores how these challenges are negotiated through pedagogical adaptation in contexts marked by insecurity, surveillance risks, trauma sensitivities, and skepticism toward accountability mechanisms. The research adopts a qualitative, practice-based design grounded primarily in reflective practitioner analysis of recurring online justice-related training cohorts conducted in 2026. This analysis is complemented by a limited number of semi-structured interviews with trainers, a coordinator, and selected participants not directly facilitated by the researcher. Interviews explore pedagogical dynamics, ethical decision-making, and how trainers and participants engage with accountability under these conditions, with all sensitive material handled through strict anonymization and ethical safeguards. A focused desk review situates the findings within broader debates on transitional justice theory and justice education. By centering justice education as an ongoing practice, the study interrogates the temporal assumptions embedded in conventional transitional justice frameworks and offers practice-based insights for educators working in protracted conflict settings.