

The Life Experiences of the Myanmar Young Exiles in Mae Sot after 2021 Coup

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Abstract

After the Myanmar's 2021 military coup, under military pressure targeting young people, many young people moved into Mae Sot, a border town between Thailand-Myanmar. However, the governance in Mae Sot is marked by inconsistency and selective law enforcement—most visibly through Thai local authorities' routine interrogations. This article explores how the young exiles coped with daily interrogation (such as check point stops, workplace or housing raid, extortionary questioning), while sustaining their livelihoods and contributed to revolutionary movements. I argue that despite their precarious status, these young exiles are able to cope local authorities' daily interrogations by strategically using bureaucratic documentations, avoiding checkpoints through community network, and relying on brokers, bribes, and informal negotiations, while allowing them to sustain livelihoods and politically engaged within given ambiguous space. The existing literature on Myanmar young migrants in Mae Sot predominantly focus on economic-driven population and to a lesser extent, Myanmar refugees. However, the life of young exiles remain under-researched. By examining the life of these young exiles after 2021 coup, this study broadens further our understanding of Myanmar migrants in Mae Sot.