

## Telenor Faces Lawsuit Over Alleged Data Sharing With Myanmar Military

A Norwegian telecommunications giant, Telenor, is facing a [lawsuit](#) filed on April 8 over allegations that it shared customer data with Myanmar's military following the 2021 coup. The case was brought by a Swedish non-profit, [Justice and Accountability Initiative](#), on behalf of Myanmar citizens who claim their personal data was handed over without consent. The lawsuit is supported by the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and the Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI).

Telenor entered Myanmar's telecom market in 2014 and quickly became one of the country's leading providers. However, after the military seized power, the company [announced](#) its withdrawal in March 2022, citing an "extraordinary situation" that made continued operations untenable. In May 2022, Telenor [completed](#) the sale of its Myanmar business to Lebanese investment firm M1 Group and majority-owner Shwe Bayin Phyu Group, the military-linked local conglomerate with interests in petroleum, one of the military-linked businesses being listed in Open Sanctions [announced](#) by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

According to the lawsuit, between the coup and its exit, Telenor allegedly complied with military requests to provide customer data, including location information. Reuters [reported](#) that data linked to at least 1,253 phone numbers may have been shared, with Telenor's headquarters in Norway advising its local team to comply with junta directives. In the news reported by DW, the company did not deny the allegations but said "Telenor Myanmar had no real options. We could not play Russian roulette with the lives of our employees."

Civil society activist Aung Thu, who was arrested in September 2021, [told](#) Reuters that his data was among those shared. Other reports, including from [DW News](#), suggest that such data may have contributed to arrests, imprisonment of activists, and even the 2022 execution of a prominent political figure, Phyo Zeya Thaw.

The lawsuit [demands](#) compensation of €9,000 (about \$10,500) for each individual whose data was allegedly shared. Legal counsel Beini Ye from OSJI stated that, "if this lawsuit is successful, this case would be the first to hold a telecoms company to account for not sufficiently protesting user data from access by an authoritarian regime."

The legal action comes amid growing concerns over digital surveillance in Myanmar. Since the coup, the military government has expanded its control over telecommunications and internet use. Most recently, authorities introduced [mandatory registration](#) of mobile devices through the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) system and the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR).

Digital rights advocates warn that such measures could further erode privacy. [Thit Nyan](#), a researcher at the Myanmar Internet Project, cautioned that without proper legal safeguards, systems like CEIR could become powerful tools for surveillance and repression.

Since the military coup in 2021, internet and mobile communications in Myanmar have increasingly been subject to monitoring and censorship, raising ongoing concerns about the safety and rights of users in the country. The outcome of the lawsuit is likely to be closely

watched both at home and abroad, as scrutiny grows over accountability and the protection of personal data in Myanmar's telecom sector.