



Press release

French company VOLTALIA must put an end to its commercial relationship with a company linked to the Myanmar military

Paris, May 26, 2020 - While the Myanmar military is once again accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity by the United Nations, the UN Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar has alerted since September 2018 that any commercial relationship with the Myanmar military was untenable given the high risks of human rights violations. In spite of this, VOLTALIA continues to supply electricity to telecom operator MyTel linked to the Myanmar military.

Sherpa, Info Birmanie, Reporters Without Borders and Justice for Myanmar ask VOLTALIA, a French company specializing in the supply of renewable electricity, to put an end to its commercial relationship with MyTel which is on the list established by the UN Fact-Finding Mission of companies that have contributed, directly or indirectly, to severe violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses.

VOLTALIA is owned by the Mulliez Group (the Mulliez galaxy brings together Décathlon, Auchan, Leroy Merlin as well as Boulanger). We therefore also send our letter to VOLTALIA's main shareholder (69.85%), Creadev, the Mulliez family's investment fund. We are counting on the vigilance of Proparco (4.10%) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (2.78%), co-investors in Voltalia.

In September 2019, the UN Fact-Finding Mission published a report on **the economic interests of the Myanmar military and their handover on the country's economy**¹. It notably provides a non-exhaustive list of groups of companies controlled by the Myanmar military which have contributed, directly or indirectly, to serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights (in particular in the regions where human rights violations are the most severe and widespread).

¹A/HRC/42/CRP.3, The economic interests of the Myanmar military, 12 September 2019.
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>

Among the listed companies is the telecom operator MyTel, partially owned by the military and which is said to finance extremist movements committing acts of violence against the country's minorities.

Other Western partners have [ended their business relationship with operator MyTel](#) and [Western Union has ended its ties to an army-controlled bank](#).

The UN Fact-Finding Mission called on the international community to cut all ties with the Myanmar army and the vast network of companies it controls and relies on because *“any foreign business activity involving the Tatmadaw and its conglomerates MEHL and MEC poses a high risk of contributing to, or being linked to, violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. At a minimum, these foreign companies are contributing to supporting the Tatmadaw’s financial capacity”*².

According to Sophie Brondel of Info Birmanie, *“accused of the most serious crimes under international law, the Myanmar military keeps acting in total impunity. It is more urgent than ever that all French companies implement the UN recommendation which should be supported politically at the highest level”*.

The situation is even more blatant since March 23, 2020 and the decision by the Myanmar government to block 221 websites including those of several independent media providing reliable information to the citizens of Myanmar. A decision infringing on the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press implemented by the telecom operator MyTel, a customer of VOLTALIA.

This letter is sent in the context of the launch of the **“Justice for Myanmar”**. Justice For Myanmar is a campaign initiated by a team of human rights activists working for equality, justice and accountability. The campaign exposes the Myanmar military’s businesses’ link to human rights violations across the country and pressures international businesses.

While displaying values of integrity and transparency, VOLTALIA keeps working directly with a company linked to the Myanmar military. *“While the global COVID-19 pandemic is making access to free and independent information all the more vital, there is a risk that the electricity supplied by VOLTALIA to MyTel is part of a national system which silences dissonant voices, in a context of serious violations of fundamental rights. The business relationship must end”*, Clara Gonzales of Sherpa said.

²A/HRC/42/CRPC.3, The economic interests of the Myanmar military, 12 September 2019, para. 6 d).

Available:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>

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To access to the letter sent to VOLTALIA (in French) [click here](#)

More information on the situation in Myanmar

The tragic human rights situation in Myanmar is well documented: in addition to serious breaches of international humanitarian law committed between 2011 and 2018 against the Rohingya minority, UN³ and NGO⁴ experts have reported elements that would constitute serious violations of the most basic rights committed by the Myanmar military in total impunity. The UN Fact-Finding mission on Myanmar found evidence of the Myanmar State's genocidal intent towards the Rohingya minority. It reports genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Rakhine State, but also in Shan and Kachin States against other minorities, from 2011 to 2019.

³A/HRC/39/64, Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, 17 septembre 2018 and A/HRC/39/CRP.2, Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, 17 September 2018, para. 87.

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.pdf

⁴<https://www.amnesty.fr/justice-internationale-et-impunite/actualites/au-myanmar-deux-ans-apres-lexode-des-rohingyas-limpunite>