

Statement by civil society organizations on the reinstatement of 2G internet in 7 townships of Rakhine State and Paletwa Township of Chin State

15th August 2020

1. On 01 August 2020 Ministry of Transport and Communications reinstated 2G internet in seven townships of Rakhine State and Paletwa Township of Chin State, where internet service had been shut down for more than a year, in order to enable conduct of socio-economic activities.

2. However, it is extremely difficult to use email, SMS, or visit websites on a 2G network, which makes it impossible to carry out activities that need a working internet service, such as checking the results of the nation-wide matriculation examination online. Socio-economic activities continue to be severely affected, human rights violations and arbitrary arrests continue just as freedom of expression remains restricted for the local populations of these areas. People in these areas continue to face restricted access to vital information about the Covid-19, whose potential second wave remains a serious threat.

3. Successive Myanmar governments have persecuted local populations in all different ways when dealing with armed struggles which are fought for political equality of all states. 2G internet service is bound to curtail election campaigning for the upcoming general elections, which are due to take place on 08 November 2020, and citizens' fundamental right to vote in these elections.

4. As the 2G internet service is being phased out in many countries around the world, the government's stated intention behind reopening this outdated 2G service is a shameful deception. It is like the democratically elected government creating a smokescreen for the Tatmadaw for a potential repeat of ethnic cleansing and other crimes, which the latter stand accused of committing in 2017.

5. If the Union Government take seriously the rights of people in dire circumstances in the conflict areas, it must honor and put into practice its own stated policy of putting people first.

Civil Society Organizations –

1. Rakhine Women's Initiative Organization (RWIO)
2. People For People (PFP)
3. Rakhine Ethnic Congress (REC)
4. Peace and Development Initiative (PDI)
5. Community Empowerment and Resilience Association
6. Wan-Lark Development Foundation
7. Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team
8. Athan (Freedom of Expression)
9. Arakan Students Union (Universities' of Rangoon)

10. Arakan CSO Network (ACN)
11. Rakhine Youth New Generation (RYNG)
12. Green Lives
13. Ohnn Taw Charity Foundation
14. Thandar Runthwee Youth Charity Association
15. RamBray Youth Network (RYN)
16. Students' Union of Taung Goke Degree College
17. Maramagyi Youths Network (MYN)
18. Chakma Youth Network
19. Taunggoke Youth Network
20. Charity Youths Organization
21. Ann Youth New Generation
22. Western Gate Humanitarian Relief Association
23. Literature Garden (Buthitaung).
24. Rathedaung Township Youth Network
25. Rakhine Youth New Generation (RYNG)
26. Mro Youths Development Organization
27. Rakhine Women New Generation
28. Mrauk-U Youths Association (MUYA)
29. Force of Life Association
30. Kan Htaung Gyi Youth New Generation

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