

Post-Elections Briefing Paper: Military Politics Rejected as Myanmar Votes for a Yet Unrealized Democracy

[24 November 2020] The international community must apply all economic, legal and diplomatic means to isolate the Myanmar military and reject its role in politics, said Progressive Voice in a briefing paper today. The decisive vote by the people of Myanmar to elect the National League for Democracy (NLD) into office for its second term is further proof of peoples' desire to defeat the military. The briefing paper also calls on the new NLD-led government to change course and not return to politics as usual during their second term in office and to be held accountable to its international human rights obligations.

The briefing paper "Mandate for Democracy? Military Politics Rejected as Myanmar Votes for a Yet Unrealized Democracy" highlights the military's weaponization of social media in spreading hate speech against minorities, particularly the Rohingya. It also outlines how, without international accountability for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Myanmar military, the persecution of ethnic and religious communities will further deteriorate despite the NLD's victory.

"For the new NLD-led government to continue its same deplorable approach to human rights in its second term in office would be unacceptable. It would be to permit the ongoing persecution of ethnic and religious minorities; to deny justice to the victims of human rights violations; and to cause immense damage to prospects for peace. The newly elected NLD-led government must change course," said Nang Zun Moe, Executive Director of Progressive Voice.

This briefing paper is the second in a series of two briefing papers by Progressive Voice covering Myanmar's 2020 general elections. The initial briefing paper launched prior to the election titled "A Vote with No Confidence: Myanmar's 2020 General Elections and Rights of Ethnic and Religious Minorities," highlighted the impacts of long-standing systemic racism and protracted armed conflict that worsened during the NLD's first term in office, resulting in greater mass disenfranchisement and marginalization in the 2020 elections, leaving a large proportion of ethnic and religious minority population with little reason to hope that Myanmar's fledgling parliamentary democracy would serve their interests and improve their lives.

"Mass disenfranchisement and marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities which occurred in 2020 elections was worse than back in 2015 elections. Further restricting the political space of ethnic people is antithetical to national reconciliation and peace building and will only lead to further conflict," said Rin Fujimatsu, Advocacy Director of Progressive Voice.

This post-election briefing paper covers the efforts of the Myanmar military to undermine the NLD-led government and electoral process, including its public questioning of the competence of the Union Election Commission. In addition, the paper analyzes the representation of women

candidates and those targeted and subjected to gender-based hate speech throughout the election campaign period. Lastly, it highlights concerning allegations of violence hurled at women candidates and incidents of violence motivated by party affiliations.

The briefing paper outlines multiple, concerning incidents of violence throughout the election campaign period. Myanmar observed more election related violent incidents this year compared with 2015. The right to participate in free and fair elections is inextricably linked to a number of basic rights, including freedom from fear and intimidation, a principle based on the rights to life, to personal integrity and to liberty and security of the person which are embedded in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly are also critical to the integrity of elections. The incidents of election violence in Myanmar, during which election officials, voters and candidates were all targeted, limits or denies the free exercise of any or all of these rights for the individuals affected and has contributed to a broader climate of fear and intimidation.

The briefing paper calls on the newly elected government to ensure justice for victims of election-related violence and their families, and to this end conduct a full and independent public inquiry into the causes of election-related violence, taking into account the role of security forces, election officials, political parties and candidates. It is critical that criminal accountability for those responsible is properly pursued, and that thorough investigations into the causes and prevention of election-related violence be carried out by the Government, the UEC, the police and political parties. These will include looking at the relationship between misinformation and hate speech online and the violent events surrounding the 2020 general elections.

The post-election briefing paper also calls on the newly elected NLD-led government to bring the Myanmar military under total civilian control; support ongoing international justice mechanisms to ensure justice and accountability for human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed against ethnic and religious minorities by members of the Myanmar military and security forces; immediately comply with the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ in the genocide case against Myanmar; as well as to address systemic and institutionalized persecution and discrimination against ethnic minorities, particularly of the Rohingya; and ultimately to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights for all the people of Myanmar and prioritize a national reconciliation and the establishment of a genuine federal democracy.

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