

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Denounce the Coup, Stand with the People of Myanmar

The CSO Working Group on MNHRC Reform calls for the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) to denounce the Myanmar military coup and stand with the people of Myanmar. The military coup by the Myanmar military on 1 February, 2021, returns the fledgling moves towards democracy and human rights to ground zero. In response to the coup, the people across the country have shown their defiance by protesting in different ways, including by joining the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

People from the whole country including those from ethnic areas, monks, filmmakers, artists, workers, students, human rights defenders and activists who are taking part in peaceful demonstrations are facing violations of their basic human rights. This includes arbitrary arrests and charges, threats, the use of indiscriminate violence such as intentionally shooting into the crowd, beatings, the use of weapons, rubber bullets and water cannons, and restrictions on freedom of expression. Due to the use of excessive force, a female student was shot in the head, and is now brain dead, while many more were injured due to police violence in Naypyidaw on 9 February.

In response to the violence, we urge the MNHRC to comply with the Paris Principles and in particular, the guidance provided by the General Observations of the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). This document provides guidance for how NHRIs in the situation of a military coup d'état or state of emergency can comply with the Paris Principles, according to its mandate and in line with international human rights standards.

The current composition of the MNHRC is based on actions taken by the National League for Democracy-led government in January 2020, under the existing flawed legal framework. However, the directive issued on 1 February, 2020 by the Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing, instructing the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and the commissioners to continue their duties has no legal basis due to the illegitimacy of the military coup. Thus, we urge the MNHRC to show that they stand with the people by condemning the military coup and not cooperating with the military regime.

If the MNHRC does not heed our call, it will be known as a National Human Rights Institution that cooperates with the military regime. We, the CSO Working Group on Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Reform, strongly reiterate our call for the MNHRC to denounce the military's actions. We will not cooperate with an MNHRC that will protect the military rather than the people of Myanmar. We, the Working Group, urge the UN, INGOs, the international governments and those who have supported the MNHRC, to heed our calls in urging the MNHRC to denounce the military regime and act in accordance with international human rights standards.

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Editor's note

The CSO Working Group on MNHRC Reform consists of 22 diverse Myanmar civil society organizations that works to advocate for the reform of the MNHRC so it is an effective, independent, and transparent NHRI that promotes and protects the rights of all people of Myanmar in line with the Paris Principles – the international standards for NHRIs.

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