



## **KHRG Supports Protests Against the Military Coup and Urges International Action to Restore and Strengthen Democracy in Burma/Myanmar**

February 11, 2021

Following the military coup which took place in Burma/Myanmar on 01 February 2021, people in Myanmar and across the globe have engaged in coordinated protest. KHRG stands in solidarity with those participating in demonstrations and firmly supports the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The right to reject military dictatorship through peaceful protests, mass demonstrations, and online discussion, is not only a fundamental element of democracy but a human right that must be protected. Articles 19 and 20 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), ensure the right to freely assemble and collectively express, promote, and defend a common interest.

The Burma/Myanmar Military (Burma/army) is currently employing tactics of a true dictatorship. The right to assemble in public spaces has been met with excessive force: water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets, and even live ammunition. There are reports of injuries, including one 20-year-old woman who is in critical condition after being shot in the head. To further discourage protests, the military has implemented restrictions on public gatherings, disrupted communication networks, and announced an 8pm-4am curfew.

KHRG calls on the Burma army to end the use of excessive and lethal force against people engaging in peaceful protest and end all restrictions on the freedom of assembly and expression. The international community must also support the people of Myanmar by pressuring the Burma/army to protect human rights and refrain from violence. The people of Myanmar, and the world, have a right to stand against this military dictatorship and we must stand together.

Today, as we are faced with military dictatorship, KHRG is fully committed to strengthening self-determination in ethnic regions and ensuring that Myanmar's democratic system serves ethnic communities. Under the NLD government, the possibility for a federal democracy was lost in the eyes of ethnic minorities. The NLD failed to represent ethnic parties and the unitary system of government directly challenged the federalist system sought by ethnic people.

Despite these failures, there were still opportunities for ethnic groups to organize and develop an ethnic identity. As demonstrated by the Burma/army's response to protests, ethnic communities fear that military rule will eliminate these opportunities. Ethnic groups may be forced underground just to associate freely. The possibility of forming a collective voice will be removed. Any chance at achieving a democracy that truly represents ethnic voices will be completely eroded.

This coup should serve as a wake-up call: the democratic system and 2008 Constitution in Myanmar is flawed. We cannot simply return to a system in which the military has unrestrained power and little accountability. The return to constitutional order is necessary, however, true democracy will not prevail unless ethnic aspirations are considered and the military is brought under civilian control.

KHRG believes the only way to ensure genuine peace in Myanmar is through the establishment of a stronger federal democratic union and greater political participation for ethnic communities. To get there, we must all support ethnic communities and strip the Burma army of its political power.

## Recommendations

1. As a critical first step, there must be a full condemnation of the military coup, the immediate release of all detained political leaders and civilians, and the reinstatement of the democratically elected government.

2. All political and financial support to the military regime must be suspended and targeted sanctions must be imposed on military-owned and controlled companies as recommended by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

3. Pressure must be placed on the NLD upon reinstatement to initiate, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders and ethnic representatives, the drafting of a new constitution.

This constitution should:

- Establish a democratic federal system.
- Allow for the self-determination of ethnic people.
- End impunity for human rights abuses perpetrated by the military.
- Bring the military under civilian control.

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