

01 April 2021

## **Joint Statement**

### **The International Community Must Sever Ties with the Illegitimate Myanmar military-controlled Union Election Commission and Stand with the People**

We, 407 Myanmar civil society organizations, call for the international community at large to sever ties with the Union Election Commission (UEC), which is a proxy for the illegitimate Myanmar military junta that has ousted UEC members and commissioners replacing them with military appointed henchmen. Donor organizations, donor countries and those who have provided support to the UEC must immediately suspend all financial, technical and other forms of cooperation or support to the UEC.

Since 1 February, when the Myanmar military illegitimately and unlawfully seized power, police with the support of soldiers have used excessive force and lethal weapons against peaceful protesters and bystanders, including deliberate beatings, stun grenades, live ammunition, snipers and assault rifles, semi-automatic machineguns, killing over 530 people and the serious injury of hundreds. As of 31 March, 2,729 people remain detained or sentenced since the coup on 1 February 2021, including three reported deaths in custody, and evidence of torture, sexual assault and violence against other detainees. In recent weeks, we have witnessed a serious escalation in the ferocity of violence and terror inflicted upon the peoples of Myanmar. Police and soldiers indiscriminately targeting people with violence, including raiding houses and looting shops and shooting people at close range. There have been more than 40 children killed by the junta, among them a 6-year-old girl, who was shot at stomach in her house in Mandalay on 23 March. The cities have become war zones, with the junta committing these atrocities at will and occupying hospitals and universities as makeshift army bases. Without direct orders from above, police and military would not commit such atrocities. No one in Myanmar feels safe under this brutal junta but we are steadfastly committed to restoring democracy in Myanmar.

In addition to the above, we are gravely concerned at the laws and directives made by this junta, namely the State Administration Council (SAC) headed by the coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, who has directed the ousting of UEC members and installing military appointed members on 23 February 2021 and 26 February 2021. There are 150 UEC officials from all parts of Myanmar who have been arbitrarily arrested in connection with unevidenced voter irregularities since the coup on February 1. Furthermore, the UEC acceded to directives of the SAC on 5 February 2021 to investigate allegations of election fraud, which directly contradicts the statement and determinations by the UEC on 28 January 2021, prior to the military junta mounting its coup, that the election reflected the will of the people. We therefore call upon the international community to cease all forms of cooperation with the UEC, including financial and technical assistance, as the UEC is taking directives from the illegitimate military junta – without legal authority.

In a [joint statement](#) on 29 January 2021, domestic election observer organizations reviewed voter list display, campaign activities, advance voting during the pre-election period, voting process on election day, and the tabulation process. They concluded that the elections were credible and reflected the will of the majority voters. We are alarmed to hear reports that military-installed UEC Chairperson U Thein Soe declared the 2020 election results ‘invalid’.

The UEC must be governed by the principles of impartiality and independence in order to administer credible elections, facilitate the lawful transition of power and for democracy to flourish. The rights to political status through self-determination and freedom of expression are

fundamental tenets of human rights. The pivotal role of the UEC is to ensure free and fair elections, paving the way for the voices of the people of Myanmar to be heard. Since the military coup d'état, the UEC has fundamentally failed in its duty by attempting to undermine the integrity of the November 8, 2020 elections by bowing down to the military junta. The junta's attacks on the election are a craven attempt to legitimize their power grab through unsubstantiated claims of fraud and irregularities. Of the utmost importance for international actors is to not validate or support the junta's planned 2022 elections, as the 2020 elections must rightfully stand. We urge you to denounce the military's actions and sever all ties with the UEC and stand with the people of Myanmar by upholding democracy and human rights.

**We call on the international community to:**

- Suspend all financial, technical and other forms of cooperation and assistance to the UEC;
- Not engage with or recognize the illegitimate Myanmar junta or the UEC, including its plan to hold an election in 2022; and
- Urge all other donor organizations and countries to suspend financial and other cooperation or support to the UEC.

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