

Open letter from Myanmar civil society organizations to the Leaders of the G7 Summit

Re: Additional meaningful measures needed in Myanmar

Dear Excellencies,

We, the 397 civil society organizations from Myanmar welcome the Group of Seven countries' leadership on issues that are of global concern. We share your opinion that global challenges, including ending the pandemic; protecting our planet; and reinvigorating devastated economies, must be addressed with the utmost seriousness, urgency and efficacy. We have been supporting these initiatives before February 1st and we would like to continue to do so in the present and in the future.

We also appreciate your attention to what is going on in our country, Myanmar, and we appreciate that Myanmar was mentioned as point 59 in the G7's final communique. We agree that you have met at a critical juncture for the planet and the people in your countries and around the world. Our people are also at a critical juncture, which is why we are approaching you with the utmost urgency.

We have read your final communique carefully and believe that it is a serious mistake to task ASEAN with a central role in tackling the crisis in our country. ASEAN's actions will not be "swift". The union has been woefully inactive thus far due to its own internal disagreements on how to respond to the crisis in Myanmar, identifying the special envoy, and forming a team to address and develop solutions to the conflict in our country.

We also feel urged to communicate to you our severe lack of confidence in the ASEAN's Five Point Consensus as the solution to the crisis in our country. This consensus was developed with the participation of only one party to, and the cause of, the conflict in our country. It was developed under the misguided belief that ASEAN is united and can play a significant role in developing peaceful solutions to the conflict in Myanmar, but the consensus has not actually addressed the crisis in any meaningful manner. In fact, ASEAN has not agreed to a timetable of actions, and there is still a glaring lack of actionable items and efforts that the ASEAN countries together have agreed upon.

Instead, the consensus provided the military junta with protection from increased international pressure. It is giving Min Aung Hlaing time to consolidate his power grab as his regime carries out systematic acts of violence, arrests and fabricated charges against anybody who should and could be a participant in ASEAN's "constructive dialogue." This dialogue was intended to include "all parties concerned to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people".

Constructive dialogue right now is impossible as those who should be engaging in these dialogues are in hiding for their lives; are in jail for crimes they did not commit; or have already been tortured to death. It is truly hard to imagine how "constructive dialogue" can take place when one side is engulfing the entire country with war, acts of torture, and murder, while the other side is in exile, has gone underground, or is being arbitrarily detained by the very party ASEAN is encouraging them to engage with.

Violence committed by the military junta has not stopped during or after ASEAN's special summit on Myanmar because the junta understands that ASEAN's words are ineffectual. In fact, the junta has been pushing its own 5-point road map to "disciplined democracy", thus taking over the ASEAN process. Although there are certain countries that are independently expressing their disappointment in the junta's lack of implementation of the ASEAN consensus, ASEAN's Secretariat in a deleted statement referred to Min Aung Hlaing as the Chairman of the State Administration Council and summarized the apparent success of the Secretary General's visit to Myanmar. Due to its own internal divisions, ASEAN is simply not able to take a lead and implement actions to help bring our country to peace.

For this reason, there will be no dialogue (whether constructive or not) or peaceful solution if additional measures by G7 countries are not undertaken without any further delay. At present, your countries support us through statements but we need support through actions.

Instead of depending on ASEAN to take the lead, additional meaningful measures and assertive diplomatic efforts by G7 countries are absolutely necessary.

If regional and other international players allow Min Aung Hlaing to succeed, he will establish a dictatorship built on war against our people. As we have long experienced military dictatorship in the past, we are well aware that the current military junta, through violence against people, will sit on top of a collapsed economy and continue their plunder of our natural resources to earn revenue to pay for weapons, ammunition, and surveillance equipment, and to augment their own luxurious lifestyle. Low ranking soldiers and policemen will rob ordinary citizens of their food and money as they are doing now. Our country will be a failed democracy that will cause instability that will ripple across the region and will have global repercussions.

Thus far, Min Aung Hlaing has failed to consolidate power over Myanmar because the people of Myanmar have been fervently resisting a military dictatorship with courage, sacrifice, and determination. However, we cannot continue our resistance without help from important regional and international players. The discrepancy in physical power between a fully armed junta and an unarmed people is too vast.

Our country right now is a crucial test of the powers of democracy. Your diplomatic leadership is needed now more than ever to demonstrate that democracy will and must prevail over authoritarianism.

We are requesting that:

- G7 countries immediately appoint its own Special Envoy to Myanmar.
- The G7 Special Envoy, together with the UN Special Envoy to Myanmar, engage in diplomatic discussions with other key countries in the region to create a coordinated framework to address the crisis in Myanmar
- The G7 Special Envoy and UN Special Envoy carry out consultations not only with the military regime but also with all Myanmar stakeholders, including the National Unity Government, ethnic armed organizations, the civil disobedience movement, civil society organizations, and the Myanmar youth who have been at the forefront of nonviolent resistance in our country.
- The G7 Special Envoy coordinate humanitarian assistance with Myanmar's neighbours (Thailand, India, China) and ethnic civil society organizations to border areas devastated by conflict, and engage in discussions with the military regime to safely deliver humanitarian aid to central parts of Myanmar impacted by conflict.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of 397 Myanmar Civil Society Organizations

**Please note: Due to serious security concerns, names of 397 local civil society organizations who endorsed and signed this letter cannot be disclosed. The signed CSOs work on range of humanitarian, human rights protection, and rights-based issues in Myanmar.*