

Press Release

CSOs call on the UN to postpone the adoption of UPR outcomes of Myanmar

Urges the Human Rights Council to reject the Myanmar military junta to the UN Offices in Geneva and recognize the National Unity Government

[1 June 2021] 414 Myanmar and international civil society organizations today calls on the UN Human Rights Council (the Council) to postpone the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) outcomes of Myanmar, scheduled for the upcoming 47th regular session of the Council in June. In a letter to the President of the Council, groups also urged the Council to reject the current Myanmar military junta representative to the UN Offices in Geneva and to recognize the National Unity Government, formed according to the outcomes of the November 2020 elections, as the legitimate representatives of the people of Myanmar. Today marks four months since the military junta conducted an illegal coup on 1 February 2021.

“Allowing the military junta that has systematically targeted and waged a nationwide assault against the people of Myanmar for the past four months to represent Myanmar at the Council would be an affront to the mandate of the Council as well as the principles of the UPR mechanism. It would also be a rejection of the Myanmar people’s persistent pursuit of democracy and human rights and could lead to a damaging betrayal of their confidence in the Council as a body entrusted to uphold human rights globally,” said Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice.

This is the third time Myanmar has been reviewed by the UPR mechanism. The review took place on 25 January 2021 where delegations offered 354 recommendations to improve the human rights situation in Myanmar. Under the National League for Democracy-led government, Myanmar had initially agreed to 119 recommendations and noted 46 recommendations following the review. Myanmar was further examining 189 recommendations when the unlawful and brutal coup attempt by the Myanmar military took place on 1 February. It is to provide the response to these pending recommendations by the 47th session of the Council when the Council is to adopt Myanmar’s UPR outcomes.

“The military has bombed our villages with continuous airstrikes, killed our children, tortured families and waged a campaign of terror over the past four months, committing grave crimes with total impunity. It would be a slap in the face for the people of Myanmar who have vehemently rejected the military junta, if they are allowed to represent Myanmar at a platform meant to improve the human rights situation of the country,” said Naw Htoo Htoo of Karen Human Rights Group.

H.E. Myint Thu currently based at the Myanmar' Permanent Mission in Geneva, appointed by the National League for Democracy-led government as the Ambassador of Myanmar to the UN Office in Geneva in October 2020, has joined the illegitimate military junta. According to the biography on the permanent mission’s website, he has been with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 30 years, including during the previous military dictatorship where he served in various missions, including at the Embassy of Myanmar in Tokyo from 1993 – 1997.

“Allowing the military junta that is accused of committing genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes to represent Myanmar at the Council would legitimize and embolden them to further commit these crimes and jeopardizes the security of the people of Myanmar. There is also an increasing concern over the fear of reprisal for participating in UN mechanisms under these conditions, especially if the military is to take part,” said Kyaw Win of Burma Human Rights Network.

Prior to 1 February, the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (FFM) found reasonable grounds to conclude that the Myanmar military has committed grave crimes under international law, including genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Those implicated in these grave crimes have led the coup, including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The Council's March resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar strongly condemned the "deposition of the elected civilian Government by the Myanmar armed forces." Allowing the military to represent Myanmar would also contradict the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar "to deny recognition of the military junta as the legitimate government representing the people of Myanmar." The World Health Organization recently excluded Myanmar from their annual assembly, proposing to defer the decision on credentials and representation of Myanmar "pending guidance from the United Nations General Assembly".

Since 1 February 2021, 840 people have been killed by the junta including at least 57 children according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Over 5,554 people, including youth, women and LGBTQI+ persons, have been arbitrarily arrested and 4,423 remain in detention facing charges or following criminal convictions for exercising their fundamental rights to reject the coup and defend democracy.

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