

June 1, 2021

H.E. Yoshihide Suga, Prime Minister
H.E. Taro Aso, Minister of Finance
H.E. Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs
H.E. Kazuyoshi Akaba, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism
Mr. Tadashi Maeda, Governor, Japan Bank for International Cooperation
Mr. Shinichi Kitaoka, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency
Mr. Tatsuhiko Takesada, President and CEO, Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport & Urban Development

【Joint Petition】

Japan Must Review All Economic Cooperation Projects in Myanmar

Four months have passed since the Myanmar military's coup d'état on February 1, 2021.

Shocking violence against civilians by the Myanmar military has continued after the coup. As of May 17, 802 people have been killed and 4,120 people have been arbitrarily detained [1]. More than a few have been killed after being detained, their bodies nearly unrecognizable when returned to their families, according to constant media reports. In addition to the detention of citizens by "security forces" being arbitrary, a state of lawlessness has continued in which detainees are denied legal protection. Further, dismissal of public servants who took part in the civil disobedience movement continues, and recently a large number of university instructors were fired. Some of the universities have received assistance from Japan through capacity building and provision of materials. State media reports do not at all reflect the violence by "security forces," and internet access is still restricted.

However, even as this situation persists, the Japanese government has yet to present a clear policy on economic cooperation to Myanmar, a country in which it has been deeply involved through debt relief and other forms of assistance.

On March 4, 32 nongovernmental organizations (later joined by three other organizations) in Japan demanded that the Japanese government investigate the connection between Japan's public funds and businesses linked to the Myanmar military, and that funding sources to the military that led the coup be severed [2]. Further, on April 1, 19 nongovernmental organizations (later joined by ten other organizations) issued a similar demand [3].

Recently, in the Communiqué following the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting on May 5, the Japanese government declared that it "will also cooperate to prevent our development aid from supporting the military-led regime and to ensure it benefits the people of Myanmar, especially those who are most in need in accordance with humanitarian principles" and that it "commit[s] to exercise due diligence in conducting business relationships with military-affiliated conglomerates, and call on others to do likewise" [4]. However, within Japan, it has only repeated to this day that it would keep an eye on the evolving situation and consider what kind of a response would be effective.

In order to immediately sever the connection between military businesses and economic cooperation from Japan, we again demand the following of the Japanese government.

1. To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA): Publicly state to the international community that no new assistance will be provided to Myanmar except for "humanitarian assistance/emergency assistance."

(English Translation. Original in Japanese)

2. To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA: Among the Official Development Assistance projects for which Exchanges of Notes have been signed with the Myanmar government since 2013, disclose those projects for which the bidding process has not been completed. Suspend those projects for which the bidding process has not been completed until a democratic government is restored, and publicly state to the international community that those projects will be suspended.
3. To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA: Among the Official Development Assistance projects for which Exchange of Notes have been signed with the Myanmar government since 2013, for the projects for which the bidding process has been completed, immediately suspend disbursements. In addition, investigate whether the suppliers for the main contractors include companies with links to the Myanmar military as listed by the United Nations fact-finding mission [5], and if such companies are among the suppliers, publicly disclose that fact. In the case that disbursements are not suspended, in light of the fact that the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank of which Japan is respectively the largest and second largest shareholder have suspended disbursements to Myanmar [6], explain why JICA is not able to take similar measures.
4. To the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport & Urban Development (JOIN): Among the five projects in Myanmar in which JOIN invests, with regard to the Thilawa Area Port Bulk Terminal Project and the Thilawa Area Port Terminal Operation Project in which JOIN has a BOT agreement and a concession agreement with the Myanmar Port Authority, sever ties with the Myanmar Port Authority which is effectively controlled by the Myanmar military. Regarding the Yankin Urban Development Project which utilizes land owned by Myanmar's Ministry of Construction, if the land lease payments cannot be prevented from generating income for the military, we demand that JOIN withdraw from the project. Regarding the Landmark Project, investigate whether the project would benefit the military including through profits, and if it is impossible to prevent the project from benefitting the military, we demand that JOIN withdraw from the project. As to the Redevelopment of the Defence Services Museum Site Project in Yangon (commonly known as Y Complex), because the site is owned by the Ministry of Defence which is practically one and the same as the military, it is impossible to discontinue the connection with the military. Therefore, we demand that JOIN withdraw from the project. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism should instruct JOIN so as to ensure that JOIN takes these actions.
5. To the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC): Immediately cancel the loan for the Y Complex project. Suspend loans for other projects in Myanmar, and urgently investigate whether companies with links to the Myanmar military are involved in those projects, or whether the implementation of those projects would economically benefit the military under current circumstances, and suspend loans for projects found to have connections to the military. The Ministry of Finance should instruct JBIC so as to ensure it takes these measures.
6. To the Japanese government: Instruct private companies in Japan that conduct business in Myanmar to sever ties to the Myanmar military, and provide assistance to ensure such severance. With regard to companies that refuse to sever ties with the military, in light of the Japanese government's Development Cooperation Charter and the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, immediately cancel public assistance.

Notes:

[1] Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) <https://aappb.org/?p=13942>

[2] Joint Petition: Urgent call for an investigation into the connection between Japan's public funds and businesses linked to the Myanmar military: http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/rq_20210304_Eng.pdf

[3] Joint Petition: Urgent call on the Japanese government to immediately suspend economic cooperation projects benefitting the Myanmar military [text available in Japanese only]: http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/rq_20210401.pdf

(English Translation. Original in Japanese)

[4] G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Meeting: Communiqué, London, 5 May 2021:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-may-2021-communication/g7-foreign-and-development-ministers-meeting-communication-london-5-may-2021>

[5] Alleged Subsidiaries and Affiliates of MEHL and MEC by Industry:

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary/Infographic3_MEHL_and_MEC_subsidiaries_and_affiliates.pdf

[6] ADB Statement on New Developments in Myanmar (2021/3/10):

<https://www.adb.org/news/adb-statement-new-developments-myanmar>

World Bank, Developments in Myanmar (2021/2/19):

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2021/02/01/developments-in-myanmar>

Petition initiated by:

ayus: Network of Buddhists Volunteers on International Cooperation

Friends of the Earth Japan

Japan International Volunteer Center

Mekong Watch

Network Against Japan Arms Trade

Endorsing Organizations:

Africa Japan Forum

Alternative People's Linkage in Asia

AM-net(Advocacy and Monitoring Network on Sustainable Development)

ANT-Hiorhsima

Asian Community Center 21

Asian Health Institute (AHI)

Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center

Bridges for Lives Mozambique

Burmese Relief Center Japan

Earth Tree

Freedom School 'YU'

Fukuoka NGO Forum on ADB

FWUBC

Health and Development Service (HANDS)

Health Assistance and Neighborhood Development Support, Inc.

Hokkaido NGO Network Council

Human Rights Now

International Cooperation NGO IV-JAPAN

JADDO

Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society (JACSES)

Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service

Japan Tropical Forest Action Network(JATAN)

Japan YMCA

Kansai NGO Council

NGO Japan Demining and Reconstruction Assistance Center

Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)

PARCIC

Peace Boat

Peace Village United

PHD Foundation

Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions

SUPPORT CRPH-JAPAN

Terra People ACT Kanagawa

The Takagi Fund for Citizen Science

WE21JAPAN

Women's Active Museum on War and Peace(WAM)

and one other organization