



## **Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR**

### **The People of Myanmar Need Urgent Assistance as the Junta Weaponises the COVID-19 Crisis**

*16 July 2021:* The international community must urgently respond to Myanmar's crippling COVID-19 crisis and get life-saving assistance across borders into the country through the democracy movement's networks, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

Local responders, ethnic service providers, civil society organisations, humanitarian groups and others aligned with the National Unity Government and Civil Disobedience Movement across Myanmar are fighting to provide vital services and life-saving humanitarian aid for millions of people as a massive third wave of COVID-19 sweeps the country. They are in urgent need of help.

**“The junta allowed COVID-19 to run free. The coup it launched in February has failed. The junta has not established ordinary government structures and it is unable to do so. The only viable way of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis in Myanmar is to deal with the democracy movement,”** said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M.

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled the extreme violence and brutality of the junta's forces for Myanmar's jungles and border states, including medical professionals now running underground clinics.

SAC-M is calling for the urgent opening of supply lines across Myanmar's borders, from Kachin state in the north to Karenni and Karen states in the east and Chin state in the west. Humanitarian assistance must be directed through ethnic administrations, civil society organisations and service providers whose networks can reach those in need in the more remote states as well as Myanmar's central towns and cities.

**“ASEAN resolved to provide humanitarian assistance over two-and-a-half months ago as part of its five-point consensus,”** said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. **“It is unacceptable that ASEAN only acts at the pleasure of the junta while so many lives are being lost. There is no excuse for ASEAN, UN agencies or any other actors to delay. There are ways to get assistance directly to the people now.”**

Since launching the coup, the junta’s forces have killed, detained and threatened medical professionals, attacked ambulances, clinics and social workers, destroyed and looted medical equipment, and occupied hospitals. They seized oxygen cylinders as the COVID-19 crisis escalated and blocked factories from refilling people’s oxygen cylinders.

**“The junta is weaponising COVID-19 for its own political gain by suffocating the democracy movement and seeking to gain the legitimacy and control it craves - and has so far been denied - by deliberately fuelling a humanitarian disaster and then co-opting the international response,”** said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. **“The generals are not partners for the delivery of aid. They are murderers who will be held to account for their crimes.”**