



## **Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR**

### **Myanmar critically needs massive UN-mandated humanitarian intervention to fight COVID**

*22 July 2021:* The UN Security Council must urgently mandate an international humanitarian intervention in Myanmar, including aid workers on the ground, to get life-saving assistance to millions of people suffering under a devastating third wave of the COVID-19 outbreak, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

The military junta in Myanmar has allowed COVID-19 to run free since it attempted to seize power six months ago. The impacts of its failed coup on 1 February have included the destruction of the country's healthcare system, and a massive third wave of COVID-19 is devastating Myanmar as a result. People are lining the streets in search of oxygen supplies, families are losing multiple loved ones, and crematoriums are filled beyond capacity.

**“The situation has become a humanitarian disaster of such proportions that an international presence of health and medical personnel has become critical,”** said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M. **“The junta has demonstrated that it has neither the will nor the capacity to tackle a crisis on this scale - a crisis that it has deliberately fuelled.”**

SAC-M is calling for the UN Security Council to mandate an urgent humanitarian intervention under a joint initiative with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. This is the only way to ensure life-saving assistance reaches the millions of desperate people in Myanmar's heartlands and in the junta's jails, where thousands of political prisoners have been detained arbitrarily.

SAC-M called last week for urgent cross-border assistance, with supply lines into Myanmar from neighbouring countries. This remains vital for the ethnic service providers, civil society

organisations, humanitarian groups and others aligned with the National Unity Government and Civil Disobedience Movement who are already fighting to keep people alive.

The National Unity Government has called for assistance from the international community. Myanmar does not have time to wait for the junta to ask for help, as was the case after Cyclone Nargis devastated the country in May 2008. However, the UN Security Council and ASEAN can use the experience gained in the aftermath of Nargis as a precedent for much-needed humanitarian intervention.

**“This is a crisis the world cannot afford to ignore, much less the region,”** said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. **“The makeshift efforts to ease the plight of people crossing into Thailand and India are far from being able to roll back the epicentre of the pandemic within the country, which needs to be the primary strategic objective of massive regional and international action.”**

The junta’s forces are seizing supplies of oxygen and personal protective equipment and medical professionals are being detained by the junta if they are caught supporting volunteer relief efforts. Community preventative measures such as checkpoints are also being destroyed. Meanwhile, the junta is drastically under-reporting case numbers.

**“The junta is not a partner for the delivery of aid. That is why a humanitarian presence on the ground is needed,”** said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. **“Assistance must be delivered through international medical personnel, and international protection given to Myanmar’s own medical professionals who are desperate to come out of hiding and work to save their country. No one will trust anything from the junta now.”**