

Joint Statement: End the Impunity of the Myanmar military, Fully Restore Rohingya's Rights

On the occasion marking four years since the Myanmar military's genocide against the Rohingya, we, the undersigned 45 Myanmar civil society organizations (CSOs) pledge to seek justice for the Rohingya and to heal the wounds of long-running ethnic and religious persecution in Myanmar. We stand in solidarity with the Rohingya and their immense struggles against oppression and discrimination, and call to restore their rights in Myanmar, for justice and accountability, and to end the impunity of the Myanmar military.

Four years ago, the Myanmar military launched a campaign of terror in Rakhine State against the Rohingya, committing the most heinous crimes under international law. The military killed thousands of Rohingya including children, committed mass murders, gang rapes, torture, and arbitrary arrests and burned villages to ashes. Other Muslim minorities, including the Kaman, were targeted alongside Rohingya. The UN-mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar concluded that Myanmar's top generals, including Commander-in-Chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing, must be investigated and prosecuted for the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya and for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Kachin and Shan States.

This wave of genocidal violence forcibly displaced over 800,000 Rohingya in Bangladesh that now host over 1.1 million refugees. With the recent attempted coup, prospects for their return to Myanmar are as far away as ever, while conditions in Bangladesh continue to deteriorate as Rohingya refugees live in crowded, underfunded camps facing fires, flooding, the COVID-19 pandemic and relocation to the unsafe and unsuitable island of Bhashan Char.

Inside Myanmar, the junta continues to violate the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to protect Rohingya from genocide. The junta-appointed local administrators have stated that there are no plans to provide life-saving COVID-19 vaccines to Rohingya living in densely-packed internally displaced persons camps that are comparable to open air prisons. The junta is deliberately withholding essential healthcare based on a highly discriminatory citizenship criterion. Meanwhile, Rohingya and other Muslim minorities living in Rakhine State continue to live under a de-facto apartheid system with strict and heavy restrictions on their movement, and access to healthcare and livelihood.

Yet, four years later, no-one has been held accountable for the grave crimes committed against the Rohingya. On the contrary, in the last six months we have experienced with horror the same military committing similar atrocities nationwide as those that were committed against the Rohingya in 2017. We have seen the burning of whole villages, mass arrests, indiscriminate shooting in civilian neighborhoods, torture, extrajudicial killings, massacres, killing of children and looting across the country. Over 1000 people have been killed and 7401 arrested since the 1 February attempted coup, though the actual numbers are likely far higher. Brutal military offensives against ethnic armed organizations including the use of aerial bombings in civilian areas have also been launched by the junta across ethnic areas. At least 230,000 people have been displaced due to these attacks in the six months since the attempted coup, and a humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by the weaponization of the COVID-19 pandemic by the military junta, has plunged the whole country into darkness.

The past six months of terror as the military robbed the people of Myanmar their sense of security and dignity, is testament to the tremendous horror the Rohingya community faced in 2017 and speaks of the terror experienced by other ethnic communities for decades.

At the root of this attempted coup is the military's total impunity that has festered over decades. The passivity, and in some cases total inaction by the international community, in particular ASEAN, to pursue

justice and accountability has further emboldened the military in their continued use of atrocity crimes that they commit today. The military and the impunity they enjoy must be stopped.

To this end, the international community must pursue justice and accountability for the grave crimes committed against the Rohingya, including by supporting the case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice, the case before the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the court in Argentina that was filed on the basis of universal jurisdiction. However, as these initiatives would not allow for the full crimes committed against the Rohingya and the people of Myanmar to be wholly investigated and persecuted, it is vital that the international community continue to explore other avenues for full justice and accountability, including the possibility of establishing an ad-hoc tribunal or a UN Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the ICC.

The current leaders of the coup are hardened criminals in uniform and must be prosecuted according to international law – and should not be offered any political legitimacy that would further embolden them to continue to act with total impunity. At this critical juncture as the people of Myanmar continue to stand strongly in defiance of the military, the people’s representative government, the National Unity Government (NUG), has taken an initial positive step by [adopting](#) a position paper acknowledging the rights of the Rohingya and atrocity crimes they faced, while committing to ensure justice and accountability for the crimes committed against the Rohingya.

But further steps must immediately be taken by the NUG to ensure the rights of the Rohingya.

The crimes committed by the military underscore the importance for the NUG to speak clearly and forthrightly against gross abuses of human rights, signaling to the military junta that they will be held accountable for their crimes. For this, the NUG must immediately ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC to ensure accountability for the crime of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We strongly urge the NUG and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) to immediately repeal the discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law and abolish the National Verification Process as well as the four “Race and Religion Protection Laws”. These racist and xenophobic laws are tools of systemic oppression, while patriarchal laws such as the aforementioned four laws related to race and religion also perpetuate gendered discrimination and violence.

Furthermore, the military and their institutional systems of oppression must be dismantled and reimagined towards an inclusive and transformative future for Myanmar that ensures a genuine federal democracy and protection of human rights for all. For this, it is imperative that Rohingya community representatives be included in the ongoing political processes including in the highest echelons of the NUG governing structures.

Justice and equality for Rohingya is not just for Rohingya but for all peoples of Myanmar. Recent public displays of solidarity with the Rohingya, seen in protest banners, on social media, and comments by public figures during Myanmar’s Spring Revolution points to a potential for an inclusive Myanmar that takes strength from its diversity and solidarity for humanity. Our friends and allies across the region and the world meanwhile continue to stand in solidarity with us.

However, until the Myanmar military junta is toppled, its impunity ended, and justice and accountability for the war crimes, crimes against humanity and crime of genocide that it has committed ensured, the whole nation remains a target for these repeated atrocities.

We stand in solidarity with the Rohingya as they mark the 4th year of the military’s genocidal campaign in August 2017. We will strive to end military rule and its impunity and reiterate our pledge to work for justice for

all – the Rohingya and other ethnic and religious minority communities, the heroes and victims who have sacrificed in the ethnic revolutions, people’s movements and nationwide uprisings including the current 2021 Spring Revolution.

– End –

Signed by:

1. Action Committee for Democracy Development
2. Anaga Alin
3. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
4. Association of Human Defenders and Promoters
5. Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
6. Burma Monitor (Research and Monitoring)
7. Burman Human Rights Network
8. Burmese Women’s Union
9. Center for Social Integrity
10. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization – DPW
11. Digital Rights Collective
12. Future Light Center
13. Future Thanlwin
14. Generation Wave
15. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
16. Kachin Women’s Association Thailand
17. Karen Human Rights Group
18. Karen Rivers Watch
19. Karen Women’s Organization
20. Karenni Human Rights Group
21. Keng Tung Youth
22. Loka Ahlinn
23. Metta Campaign Mandalay
24. Myanmar Cultural Research Society
25. Myanmar Doctors for Human Rights Network
26. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
27. Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma)
28. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
29. Olive Organization
30. Pa-O Women’s Union
31. Progressive Voice
32. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Boarder Areas (SCOEWBA)
33. Shan MATA
34. Shwe Min Tha Foundation (Myanmar)
35. Sisters 2 Sisters
36. Southern Youth Development Organization
37. Synergy – Social Harmony Organization
38. Ta’ang Women’s Organization

39. Ta'ang Legal Aid
40. Tanintharyi MATA
41. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar
42. Union of Karenni State Youth
43. Women Advocacy Coalition – Myanmar
44. Women's League of Burma
45. Women's Peace Network

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****Update - Number updated for 45 Myanmar civil society organizations*