



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

Statement on Declaration of People's Defensive War

8 September 2021: The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) finds it unfortunate that the National Unity Government (NUG) was ultimately forced to react in calling for a people's defensive war against the military junta, but also understands the NUG and the people's frustration after seven months of brutality by the junta and inaction by the international community.

"Violence is the cause of the suffering of the people of Myanmar, it is not the solution," SAC-M's Chris Sidoti said. "We empathise with the NUG, but we fear for what will happen as a result of this decision."

The Tatmadaw, Myanmar's rapacious military, has killed more than 1,000 people since it launched its illegal coup in the dead of night on February 1. It has launched airstrikes against civilians and displaced 300,000. It then deepened the massive humanitarian crisis it set in motion by weaponizing the latest COVID-19 outbreak, hoarding medical supplies for itself and denying oxygen to the people most in need.

"The junta responded to the peaceful resistance to the coup with sheer brutality, employing horrific tactics that amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes," said SAC-M's Yanghee Lee. "The people have been under attack for seven months now from a military that has remained both intransigent and indifferent to their suffering."

Myanmar's broad democracy movement, represented by the NUG, has stepped in to provide vital services to people in the vacuum created by the military. This democratic groundswell includes the NUG's People's Defence Force (PDF) and ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) across the length and breadth of the country.

It is important to note that the NUG has prescribed a military code of conduct for the PDF that places protection of civilians first and foremost. In July the NUG made the decision to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, enabling the Court to hold all actors, including the PDF and EAOs, in Myanmar accountable under the Rome Statute.

The international community has had ample opportunity to come to the aid of the people of Myanmar but has consistently failed. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations took six months to merely appoint a Special Envoy and has yet to deliver humanitarian assistance despite promising to do so in April.

“The ASEAN Special Envoy, finally appointed after six months of unacceptable inaction, made an ill-judged call this week for a ceasefire in Myanmar, when what should have been emphasised was the immediate cessation of violence as was included in the five-point consensus,” said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. “A ceasefire is totally different. It does not reflect the situation on the ground and fully meets the interests of the Tatmadaw, which has always used ceasefires to gain a strategic advantage.”

The NUG’s declaration reflects the increasing frustration of those inside Myanmar who have bravely resisted the junta’s brutal campaign of violence for seven months with minimal international support. The international community has another chance to take action and support the people of Myanmar when the United Nations General Assembly convenes next week.