



UN Secretary-General’s new report whitewashes the UN’s historical failures in Myanmar
The United Nations’ ‘systemic failures’ in Myanmar remain unaddressed amid grave crimes committed by the Myanmar military

[18 March 2022, Geneva] Progressive Voice and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) express deep disappointment at the UN Secretary-General’s follow up [report](#) to the 2019 ‘brief and independent inquiry’ in the UN involvement in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018 (Rosenthal Report).

The Rosenthal Report found ‘systemic failures’ and ‘structural shortcomings’ in the UN’s handling of the Rohingya crisis.

The issues outlined in the [report](#), which describes the presence of the UN in Myanmar as “dysfunctional”, remain unresolved, including the absence of a clear and unified strategy, lack of horizontal and vertical communication and coordination within the UN systems, and bureaucratic dysfunction.

Despite the lack of progress, the Secretary-General’s report paints a rosy picture of a “new generation of UN Country Teams, under the leadership of an empowered, independent reinvigorated Resident Coordinators” as one of the hallmarks of its reforms in response to the Rosenthal Report.

However, the report fails to mention that, ironically, since the Rosenthal report, Myanmar has repeatedly been without a permanent Resident Coordinator for prolonged periods, and even in the midst of the current catastrophic crisis, the position has been left vacant for six months and counting.

Moreover, the Secretary-General’s proposed solution merely repackages past failed programs, a ‘business as usual’ approach in the face of catastrophe.

Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice said: ‘The UN is once again making the same mistakes and repeating its cycle of failure in responding to the Myanmar military’s grave human rights violations and atrocity crimes. In highlighting ‘empowered’ and ‘reinvigorated Resident Coordinator’ system in other countries, while overlooking the abysmal lack of UN leadership in Myanmar since the Rohingya genocide in 2017, the report whitewashes the UN’s historical and continuing failures in Myanmar. The UN Secretary-General has lacked impetus in rallying nations towards meaningful actions to stop the military’s violence and protect the people in the wake of the coup, opting for a ‘business as usual’ mentality in the face of grievous human rights violations.

‘The UN must take immediate action to ensure institutional accountability for its actions in Myanmar. This is vital for the UN to prove its own mandate and rebuild trust from the people of Myanmar and victims and survivors of human rights violations – those whom the UN system should be protecting, and yet continues to fail.’

FORUM-ASIA said: ‘The UN’s ‘systemic failure’ in Myanmar during the Rohingya crisis must be addressed at the highest levels of the UN system. Before Myanmar, similar patterns of failures have contributed to grave violations in Sri Lanka. The UN’s leadership has so far been anemic and has not demonstrated genuine willingness and commitment to address and remedy its own failures and shortcomings. There must be a comprehensive and independent inquiry and review of the UN system that failed the people of Myanmar. The UN must ensure accountability and end these repetitive cycles and patterns of negligence and dysfunction in responding to crises in Myanmar and around the world.’

The appalling lack of leadership on Myanmar in the UN system, even prior to the 1 February 2021 failed military coup has again contributed to UN’s failure to implement a coherent system-wide response to grave violations of human rights and atrocity crimes being committed by the military.

‘Evidently, the UN severely lacks a coherent protection framework in its response to the ongoing human rights catastrophe in Myanmar’, said the groups.

“A brief and independent inquiry into the involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018 – Report of the Secretary-General”, issued during the UN Human Rights Council’s 49th Regular Session is supposed to track the progress in the implementation of recommendations of the Rosenthal Report and follow-up action to enable effective work of the UN and to strengthen prevention capacity of the UN System. The report can be viewed here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session49/list-reports>.

The report ‘a Brief and Independent Inquiry into the Involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018’ can be viewed here: <https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/Myanmar%20Report%20-%20May%202019.pdf>.

For more information, please contact:

- Khin Ohmar, Progressive Voice, info@progressive-voice.org
- Adam Ahmed, FORUM-ASIA, adam@forum-asia.org

For media inquiries, please contact:

Communication and Media Programme, FORUM-ASIA, communication@forum-asia.org