

# BURMA 2021 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Burma's military overthrew the democratically elected civilian government via a coup d'état on February 1, declaring a state of emergency and transferring all executive, legislative, and judicial authorities to the State Administration Council, an authoritarian military-run administrative organization led by armed forces commander in chief Min Aung Hlaing. The military detained key elected civilian leaders and dissolved all national and subnational legislatures, including the Union Parliament, forcing many elected members to flee their homes and offices or face potential arrest. On February 5, elected parliamentarians from the National League for Democracy and allied political parties formed the Committee Representing the Union Parliament, which subsequently declared the regime "illegitimate" and the 2008 constitution abolished before proclaiming a "National Unity Government" on April 16.

The Myanmar Police Force is primarily responsible for internal security. The Border Guard Police is administratively part of the Myanmar Police Force but operationally distinct. Both fall under the regime's Ministry of Home Affairs, led by an active-duty military general and itself subordinate to the military command. The armed forces under the Ministry of Defense are responsible for external security but are engaged almost exclusively in internal activities, including combat against ethnic armed groups. Members of the regime security forces continued to commit numerous gross violations of human rights.

Regime security forces arrested State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Myint, and other leading members of the civilian government and National League for Democracy on February 1. Nationwide prodemocracy protests following the coup and the Civil Disobedience Movement, continuing as of November, opposed and disrupted efforts by the regime to exert full administrative control over governing institutions. The regime responded with repressive tactics such as the mass arrest of its political opponents and the use of widespread lethal violence against unarmed persons, including men, women, and children. Fighting between the military and ethnic armed organizations escalated, and the National

































































































ministries regulated occupational safety and health laws (e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation).

**Informal Sector:** Observers agreed the great majority of the country's workers were in the informal sector. Wage, hours and occupational safety and health laws did not apply to those in the informal sector or self-employed.

Informal workers' jobs were less secure during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in April 2020 the Ministry of Health ordered that no more than 50 workers could be present at a construction site. One of the largest employers of informal labor was the construction sector. The postcoup regime retained the policy.

Informal-sector jobs usually lacked basic benefits such as social and legal protections. In at-risk industries – defined as having occupational hazards, volatile payment structures, and ease in exploiting labor rights – on average, one in five workers had an informal work arrangement, although the proportion was even higher in manufacturing, construction, recreation, and personal services. In addition, nearly two-thirds of the workers in medium- to high-risk industries were employed informally.