



Special Advisory Council for — MYANMAR —

ASEAN Risks Flouting All Humanitarian Principles

9 May, 2022

The plans of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for humanitarian assistance to Myanmar flout fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and will advance the military objectives of the Myanmar military junta, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M). The plans were announced by the current ASEAN Chair, Cambodia, following a consultative meeting on Friday.

The outcomes of the consultative meeting include plans for the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) to deliver aid to areas identified by the Myanmar military junta and in coordination with the junta.

“The areas singled out for humanitarian assistance by the military junta under ASEAN’s plan are the very areas where the junta has been relentlessly attacking civilians with airstrikes and scorched-earth campaigns for months on end,” said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. **“The junta has no power in those areas and its attempt to control ASEAN’s delivery of aid to them is nothing more than a strategy designed to advance its military agenda.”**

“ASEAN aid personnel working in areas under attack from the junta could become unwitting ‘human-shields’ for the junta’s ulterior motives,” Marzuki Darusman added.

There are 14 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar, while an estimated 800,000 people are displaced inside the country. Most are seeking refuge from the junta’s attacks in territory along Myanmar’s borders outside the junta’s control. The junta refuses to permit cross-border aid into these areas.

“Under no circumstances should ASEAN be hailed for colluding with the junta to develop a military-controlled plan for humanitarian assistance, more than one year into the crisis, when it has failed to get support to the cross-border networks of local civil society, community and faith-based groups and ethnic service providers that have been working tirelessly to keep people alive,” said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. **“It is inhumane for ASEAN’s own member states that neighbour Myanmar to keep their borders closed just to please the junta, which is the cause of Myanmar’s suffering. “**





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"Myanmar's neighbouring countries must not forget their international obligation to assist in delivering humanitarian aid through their borders," Yanghee Lee added.

The consultative meeting was held less than a week before an important summit between the United States (US) and ASEAN, due to take place on 12 and 13 May in Washington DC. ASEAN has been criticised for failing to make any progress towards resolving the junta-made crises in Myanmar. Myanmar junta-leader Min Aung Hlaing has repeatedly humiliated Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia in his misguided efforts to engage the junta.

"ASEAN's plans for humanitarian assistance to Myanmar are clearly a vain attempt to have something to show the US. ASEAN claims to have the central role in Southeast Asia but its Five Point Failure shows its irrelevance. The outcomes of the consultative meeting are an outrage," said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M.

The Cambodian Foreign Minister tried to implicate the United Nations (UN) Special Envoy to Myanmar in this plan by saying she had participated in the meeting. In fact, her attendance had been blocked by the junta. She was invited and then disinvited. At this point, ASEAN's credibility is hanging by a thread, says SAC-M.

SAC-M is calling on ASEAN to abide by the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. ASEAN must secure the immediate opening of cross-border humanitarian corridors into Myanmar and coordinate with all relevant parties, including the National Unity Government, the National Unity Consultative Council, Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations and local actors to finally deliver the aid it promised the people of Myanmar more than one year ago. If it fails, it must get out of the way of others who are far more willing to act.

