



Myanmar: ASEAN leaders must take decisive steps, stop aiding and abetting junta's atrocity crimes

(Jakarta, 9 November 2022) — ASEAN must stop aiding and abetting the Myanmar military's atrocity crimes and take concrete action to exclude all political and non-political representatives of the Myanmar military junta from attending ASEAN summits, meetings and activities, said Progressive Voice (PV) and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA).

Justice For Myanmar, a group of activists, [found](#) that the Myanmar military junta had recently been appointed chair of the [ASEAN Air Chiefs Conference](#) (AACC). General Tun Aung led the junta's delegation where they assumed the AACC Chairmanship for the coming year.

General Tun Aung is a former director of the military-owned Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd and is sanctioned by the UK and Canada. Just yesterday, in its fifth round of sanctions, the EU also [sanctioned](#) General Tun Aung among other individuals and an entity linked to the Myanmar military.

Justice For Myanmar's findings come just days before the ASEAN Summit, which is set to take place on 10 - 13 November in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

"By allowing the Myanmar military junta to chair the ASEAN Air Chiefs Conference, ASEAN is violating the Five-Point Consensus to cease the ongoing violence, doing the opposite of ensuring regional stability. ASEAN is becoming further complicit in the junta's war crimes and crimes against humanity by emboldening the military junta," said Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice.

"General Tun Aung is a sanctioned individual, and the crimes being committed by the military under his command are well known. Instead of holding General Tun Aung accountable for war crimes, ASEAN is rolling out a carpet for him to be in charge of the regional body that aims for greater partnership between air forces. ASEAN must stop aiding and abetting the junta's atrocity crimes. Top leaders of ASEAN must take decisive action at the upcoming Summit to exclude both political and non-political junta representatives from all ministerial and related meetings and activities. This should include the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)," said Khin Ohmar.

"ASEAN's dialogue partners, EU, Australia, New Zealand, US, Japan and South Korea must immediately sanction the Air Force Chief," said the rights groups.

In its most recent attack, the Myanmar military carried out [airstrikes](#) targeting the Kachin people gathered at a music festival on 23 October, reportedly killing at least 80 people and injuring more than 100 others. In September, the military also launched [airstrikes](#) on a school in session in Sagaing Region, killing at least 11 children.

Over 2,400 people have been killed by the junta since its attempted coup in February 2021; this number only continues to climb.¹

The junta also continues to co-chair the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group (ADMM-Plus EWG) on Counter Terrorism, together with Russia.

In July, 448 civil society organizations sent an [open letter](#) urging members of the ADMM-Plus EWG on Counter Terrorism to boycott the meeting. Australia, New Zealand, US, Japan and South Korea did not attend. Despite ASEAN dialogue partners distancing themselves from the meeting, with the US specifically [urging](#) partners to use the mechanism for defence cooperation and “not to deliver propaganda,” ASEAN has allowed the junta to take control of the group’s [website](#) and use it as a platform to spread disinformation and propaganda, [according](#) to Justice For Myanmar.

“These instances are yet more examples of why the international community must no longer rely on ASEAN and its Five Point Consensus to provide solutions for the crisis in Myanmar. If ASEAN leaders want to stop aiding and abetting atrocity crimes and hope to gain any semblance of credibility, they must exclude the junta from its meetings. They must recognise and work with the National Unity Government and urge action from the UN Security Council,” said FORUM-ASIA.

The groups slammed ASEAN’s response to the crisis, which effectively emboldened the junta to carry out its war of terror. On 27 October, ASEAN foreign ministers concluded a special meeting on Myanmar by opting to retain the Five Point Consensus, which the Myanmar military has constantly defied.² Two days after the airstrike, the ASEAN Chair released a statement calling on “one with significant power” to cease its violence, not only falling short of holding the junta accountable but not even explicitly naming them.

“The human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar pose a threat to regional stability; it is not merely an “internal affair”. ASEAN must refrain from legitimising the military junta: stop giving a seat to them at its summits and meetings. It should instead engage with the National Unity Government and support civil society groups,” said FORUM-ASIA.

The groups called on ASEAN leaders to develop a concrete plan of action that includes clear benchmarks and indicators of success to realistically measure progress, in a joint [open letter](#) signed by 505 organizations.³

“We urge the international community to increase tighter economic and diplomatic sanctions on the Myanmar military, including imposing a ban on the sale of aviation fuel to the junta to reduce its ability to carry out airstrikes on civilians. A comprehensive arms embargo with effective enforcement mechanisms is urgently needed to cut off the junta’s access to the weapons it is using indiscriminately,” said the groups.

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Progressive Voice is a participatory rights-based policy research and advocacy organisation rooted in civil society, that maintains strong networks and relationships with grassroots organisations and community-based organisations throughout Myanmar. <https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/>

¹ <https://aappb.org/?p=23257>

² <http://l.forum-asia.org/Beyond.FPC>

³ https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022.10_OpenLetter_ASEAN_SE_FINAL.pdf

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. www.forum-asia.org

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