



လွတ်လပ်သော နိုင်ငံအဆင့် လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဌာနဆိုင်ရာ
အရပ်ဘက်လူထုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ အလုပ်အဖွဲ့ (မြန်မာ)
CSO Working Group on Independent National
Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar)

To:

H.E. Maryam Abdullah Al Attiyah, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)
Chairperson, Chairperson of the Qatar NHRC

23 February 2023

Open Letter to Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

Re: invitation of military-controlled Myanmar National Human Rights Commission to the 2023 Annual Meeting of GANHRI

We, the Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution for Burma/Myanmar (“Working Group”) and the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) condemn in the strongest terms the extending of an invitation to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) to participate in the Annual Meeting of The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), which will be held in person in Geneva, Switzerland on 14 -16 March 2023. We strongly urge GANHRI to disinvite the MNHRC, which is nothing more than a proxy-body of the Myanmar military and is complicit in barbaric human rights violations and atrocity crimes against the people of Myanmar since the illegal failed coup on 1 February 2021.

Since its inception, and within the period of the illegal failed coup, the people of Myanmar have [witnessed](#) the repeated and consistent failures of the MNHRC, in dereliction of its duty to protect and promote human rights in line with Paris Principles. The MNHRC has shielded the junta from international scrutiny, by offering cover for the junta’s atrocity crimes. It is antithetical to GANHRI’s mandate as an international body for national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to continue to extend invitations, host and offer membership rights to the MNHRC, and contrary to its obligation to uphold human rights and to the purpose of the Paris Principles. GANHRI is risking damaging its own reputation, credibility and integrity, as well as being in danger of aiding and abetting the human rights violations of the Myanmar military junta by continuing to engage with the military-controlled MNHRC.

Over two years since its illegal coup attempt, the Myanmar military has shown no intention to end its nationwide terror campaign as it continues to perpetrate an all-out war against the entire population of Myanmar. The Myanmar military junta has reached unprecedented depths of cruelty, for instance, conducting [arson attacks](#) on whole villages, targeted killings of civilians, massacres, [airstrikes](#), arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, and have persecuted political figures and human rights defenders.

As of 22 February 2023, over 3,000 people have been mercilessly [killed](#) by the junta (including at least 278 children), over 19,800 have been arbitrarily arrested, and over 15,900 remain in detention, with around 144 people on death row. Last year, the military carried out its first summary execution in decades by executing four pro-democracy activists, including a former lawmaker, drawing the [ire](#) of the international community. The junta is routinely [committing](#) war crimes and crimes against humanity against civilians, including [children](#), with [places of worship](#), schools, and hospitals being targeted by a

military that is committing nationwide terror. This has triggered a full-scale [humanitarian crisis](#), with conservative estimates of 1.2 million people becoming internally displaced and an estimated 17.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023.

Despite the grave international crimes being committed by the Myanmar junta over the past two years, the MNHRC has done nothing to protect the rights of the Myanmar people. Instead, it has been deplorably pursuing regional and international legitimacy for the military junta by joining regional NHRIs meetings and conferences, representing the interests of the illegitimate military junta and [delivering](#) the military junta material for its propaganda offensive. The MNHRC has [described](#) the illegal coup leader, Min Aung Hlaing, as humanitarian minded, and [praised](#) him for releasing prisoners including some politicians, activists, and celebrities who were unlawfully imprisoned on criminal charges simply for their participation in peaceful demonstration against the illegal coup of February 2021. Such actions by the MNHRC are smokescreens to shield Min Aung Hlaing and the junta from its grave crimes. Instead of praising the junta leader, the MNHRC should have denounced the illegal attempted coup, supported the Civil Disobedience Movement and called out human rights violations unfolding in the country in line with duties of an NHRI as prescribed by GANHRI and the Paris Principles.

Instead of inviting the military-controlled MNHRC, the GANHRI must shift its support towards the [establishment](#) of a new independent NHRI under the National Unity Government (NUG), currently underway. The NUG was formed on the basis of the 2020 general elections, and enjoys widespread support, representing the will of the people of Myanmar as the only legitimate government of Myanmar. Given the [unlawful](#) attempt by the military junta to seize power, any institution that operates and serves the interests of the military junta in international foras must be disengaged with, including the MNHRC, and in this regard, we call on GANHRI to immediately retract the invitation

We, the Working Group, reiterate the calls we [made](#) in the open letter that was sent to GANHRI along with the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) on 30 June 2022, in which we called on GANHRI Bureau to revoke MNHRC's membership and strip them of their 'B' status under Article 27 of the GANHRI Statute, for falling well below 'partial compliance' with the Paris Principles (pursuant to Article 24.2). Furthermore, GANHRI must not recognize the MNHRC as a functional NHRI given they have grievously breached the Paris Principles, which have been mounting well before the attempted coup. GANHRI must support the people's movement in Myanmar, and the efforts and desire to build a genuine federal democracy and for the realization of human rights for all.

For any further inquiries, please contact:

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About the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI currently has 33 member organisations from 21 countries or territories. ANNI members work on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and

General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI). The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) has served as the Secretariat of ANNI since its establishment in 2006. *Website:* <http://l.forum-asia.org/ANNI>

About CSO Working on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar)

The CSO Working on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar) (“Working Group”) advocates for the establishment of a new national human rights institution (NHRI) – tentatively named the Union Human Rights Commission – to replace the illegitimate Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) which has aligned itself with the illegal military junta. The Working Group was previously known as ‘CSO Working Group on MNHRC Reform’; currently, it consists of 20 Myanmar Civil Society Organisations. From its founding in 2019 until the attempted coup in February 2021, the Working Group consistently advocated for an effective MNHRC that demonstrated a commitment to the international standards set forth in the Paris Principles.

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