

## **Civil society groups demand Indonesia to implement cohesive policy and approach to not legitimise Myanmar junta in ASEAN**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Myanmar's attempted coup, we, the undersigned, call on Indonesia as the Chair of ASEAN to not legitimise the Myanmar junta at any cost. This shall include a commitment to disinvite junta representatives from ASEAN meetings at all levels.

Earlier this week, a programme of the upcoming ASEAN Tourism Ministers & Related Meetings 2023 scheduled on 2 to 5 February 2023 indicated the attendance of the Myanmar junta's Hotels and Tourism Minister – Htay Aung to the meeting. His profile was later deleted from the official website. The ASEAN Tourism Forum programme which begins on February 1, 2023, coincides with the second anniversary of the military's illegal coup attempt and at a time when the junta wages a terror campaign against the people of Myanmar.

Our organisations appreciate the effort of Indonesia as the Chair of ASEAN to remove the junta's Hotels and Tourism Minister from the list of high-level officials. This move is consistent with the effort proposed by the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, in November 2022 to bar Myanmar military representatives from all ASEAN related meetings, including the Summit.

However, we remain concerned and vigilant. The fact that the initial programme still included the representative of the illegitimate junta sends a signal that the message from President Joko Widodo has yet to be carefully mainstreamed and implemented by all sectors and ministries.

Over the last two years, more than 2,700 people have been killed and over 17,000 people have been illegally detained according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Those in detention face torture, murder, and deprivation of food and water. Women have been raped and gang-raped inside and outside prison. Properties have been robbed and destroyed by junta soldiers. Since February 1, 2021, over 1.1 million people have been displaced. Towns and villages have been burned or blown away by artillery shelling and airstrikes.

We would like to reiterate that any engagement with the junta is in breach of the ASEAN Charter. The Myanmar junta's indiscriminate onslaught against anyone perceived to oppose its rules has caused widespread human rights violations, including by targeting civilians through air and ground assaults. The crimes that are being committed by the Myanmar military amount to crimes against humanity. The Myanmar military is alleged of committing atrocities, with investigation ongoing by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, and under a universal jurisdiction case in Argentina.

Tourism is one of the sectors the junta aims to obtain legitimacy as it is crucial to finance its atrocities. The junta profits from all tourism in Myanmar including through visa fees, insurance, official exchange and when tourists use military-owned hotels and transport. In 2021, the Minister of Planning, Finance and Investment of the National Unity Government,

which is the legitimate government of Myanmar, said, "the people of Myanmar are being killed, raped, detained and their houses and possessions seized or destroyed. This is not a time for sightseeing."

After kicking off its ASEAN Chairmanship with the theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth" on Sunday, 28 January 2023, we the undersigned appreciate the effort from the Government of Indonesia to set the tone of not legitimising the junta by removing high-ranking officials of the illegitimate junta responsible for widespread human rights violations. We call for Indonesia to adopt cohesive and consistent policy and approaches by ensuring that junta representatives are barred from all ASEAN meetings at all levels, both at the ministerial level and below and to start dialogue with the National Unity Government as the legitimate government.

Indonesia as Chair of ASEAN must show that the regional bloc can play a positive role and stand with the people of Myanmar, and not continue to lean towards the military junta as ASEAN has been doing for the past two years. Indonesia must not follow the same playbook that only emboldens the junta to continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with complete impunity.

#### **List of Endorsement**

1. ALTSEAN Burma
2. Amnesty International Indonesia
3. ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
4. ASEAN Youth Forum
5. Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI)
6. Arus Pelangi
7. Asia Democracy Network
8. Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)
9. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
10. Better Engagement Between East and Southeast Asia (BEBESEA)
11. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
12. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS)
13. Human Rights Working Group
14. Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI)
15. Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI)
16. Initiative for International Dialogue (IID)
17. Kurawal Foundation
18. Migrant CARE
19. Progressive Voice
20. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFENet)
21. SEAJunction
22. YAPPIKA

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