



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

For Immediate release

Civil society welcomes the special review of junta’s Myanmar national human rights commission’s status in global body

The Special Review must lead to the suspension or expulsion of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

(1 May, 2023) The CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma-Myanmar) (“Working Group”) and the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) welcome the decision by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions’ Sub-Committee on Accreditation (GANHRI-SCA) to [initiate a Special Review](#) of the Myanmar military junta’s national human rights commission in its next session in October. The decision comes following repeated calls by the Working Group, ANNI and their local, regional, and international partners for the GANHRI Bureau to revoke the membership of the junta’s human rights commission and to strip it of its ‘B’ status.

GANHRI is one of the largest human rights networks worldwide, with a membership of 120 national human rights institutions (NHRIs). Its Head Office is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

GANHRI [recently amended its Statute](#) to enable ‘B’ status NHRIs to also be subject to a Special Review or suspension if their circumstances have changed in a way that may affect their compliance with the Paris Principles. Previously, only ‘A’ status members that are fully in compliance with the international standards that guide the work of NHRIs were subject to reviews.

In 2015, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), currently appointed and controlled by the illegal military junta, was accredited a ‘B’ status as a member of the GANHRI – meaning it only partially complies with the “Paris Principles” which are the minimum standards that NHRIs must meet to be considered credible. The ‘B’ status of the MNHRC [allows](#) the illegitimate military junta-controlled national human rights commission to participate in regional and international meetings.

The MNHRC, which was [ordered](#) by the Myanmar military junta on 1 February 2021 to continue its work, has been condoning and abetting the said military junta in its ongoing atrocity crimes since the attempted coup, and has been acting as a mouthpiece for the junta’s fraudulent actions to fend off international probing into its grave crimes.

The March 2023 report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/52/21), states: “The judiciary of Myanmar and the National Human Rights Commission have effectively been subsumed under military control, thus eliminating any element of independence and credibility.”

The MNHRC, which has acted as smokescreen for the military since its inception in 2011, is now continuing to peddle the current military junta's propaganda through its statements and on its website since the attempted coup. On 7 January 2023, it [described](#) the junta's leader and war criminal Min Aung Hlaing's decision to release political prisoners, many of whom may have been tortured in detention, as "humanitarian actions".

In March this year, the Working Group and ANNI conveyed civil society's concerns regarding the continuing membership of junta's NHRI in GANHRI, to the GANHRI Bureau and the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF), as well as to various UN Offices and Missions in Geneva.

Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice said: "While long overdue, we welcome the decision by GANHRI to initiate a Special Review of the Myanmar military's national human rights commission.

"It is absurd that a human rights commission controlled by the military junta that is committing atrocities with total impunity is allowed membership as part of the world's largest network of human rights institutions. The decision to initiate a Special Review sends a clear message that there must be a strong response to the MNHRC's non-compliance with international human rights standards.

"There is already ample evidence that the MNHRC has continuously fallen well below international standards required of NHRIs and through its support for the murderous military, it is complicit in the junta's atrocity crimes. This Special Review must lead to concrete actions, including the suspension of the MNHRC from all human rights bodies and networks.

"International bodies, including the GANHRI and APF must listen to the voices, concerns and recommendations of the people of Myanmar as they continue to resist the brutal Myanmar military junta."

Mary Aileen D. Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA, the Secretariat of ANNI said: "We welcome the decision of the GANHRI-SCA to initiate a Special Review of the MNHRC in its upcoming session. Civil society in Myanmar and ANNI has continuously engaged in constructive dialogues with regional and international human rights networks and bodies, and has consistently called on them to take a principled stand of revoking the MNHRC's membership in these bodies.

"A Special Review of the MNHRC is vital for ensuring accountability for the lack of redressal of grave human rights violations; for paving the way for a fully-compliant NHRI under the Paris Principles; and for supporting the people of Myanmar in working towards a genuine federal democracy."

Thinzar Shunlei Yi from the Working Group said: "The Special Review of the MNHRC by GANHRI sends a strong message that human rights institutions cannot be used as a smokescreen for an illegitimate military junta committing atrocities.

"Civil society organisations have proposed a law to the National Unity Government (NUG) in order to establish a new independent, Union Human Rights Commission (UHRC) that upholds the Paris Principles.

"It is time for the NUG to swiftly act to adopt the law and establish a new commission – the UHRC – that genuinely promotes and protects human rights in Myanmar without delay."

For more information, please contact:

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About the Asian NGO 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 the CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar)

The CSO Working on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar) advocates for the establishment of a new NHRI – tentatively named the Union Human Rights Commission – to replace the illegitimate 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 Organizations. 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.

More information at <https://www.facebook.com/WGonNHRIBurma>