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## PRESS RELEASE

### End Myanmar National Human Rights Commission's complicity in junta's atrocity crimes

#### *GANHRI must expel or suspend the MNHRC*

- The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has been condoning and abetting the Myanmar military junta in its ongoing atrocity crimes since the failed coup of February 1, 2021 and acting as a mouthpiece for the junta's fraudulent actions to fend off international probing into its grave crimes.
- Regional and international forums governing national human rights institutions like Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) must immediately address the MNHRC's complicity in junta's vicious abuses by suspension or expulsion, and actively support Myanmar civil society's efforts to set up a principled human rights institution.

[Bangkok, Thailand] The Myanmar military junta has co-opted the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) and its silence, and instrumentalized the national human rights institution as part of its propaganda arsenal to claim legitimacy, conceal its grave crimes, and avert international attention and criticism.

The international community must realign its comprehension with the accurate circumstances where the MNHRC has been operating, and respond appropriately and with accountability. It should also guarantee concrete support towards the establishment of a Union Human Rights Commission, said 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).

The Asia Pacific Forum (APF), Southeast Asia National Human Rights Institution Forum (SEANF) and GANHRI have disappointingly kept silent about the Commission's egregious dereliction of its duty to the Myanmar people and obligations under the Paris Principles, said the groups.

Their continued engagement and cooperation with the MNHRC, most recently GANHRI's invitation to its Annual Meeting scheduled at the UN, signify these institutions' tacit endorsement of the MNHRC and, by extension, the illegal and illegitimate junta. For the first time, GANHRI issued a [statement](#) on Myanmar yesterday, responding to civil society [concerns](#), in which it reiterated its commitment to strengthen the work of National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) members including the MNHRC, despite mounting evidence of its absolute lack of independence and willingness to align themselves with the illegal military that continues to commit grave crimes.

The analysis paper "Accessory to the Junta's Crimes," [launched](#) during the webinar, highlights the concealment and complicity of the MNHRC in ongoing horrendous crimes committed by the Myanmar military junta against civilians and popular resistance since the failed coup of February 1, 2021.

## Quotes by co-organizers:

**Khin Ohmar, Chairperson of Progressive Voice, said:** “The international community must be disillusioned, and, in particular, international human rights bodies should be extremely outraged by the MNHRC’s blatant placation of appalling crimes nationwide since the failed coup.

Responding to the statement issued by GANHRI, Khin Ohmar said, “A truly rigorous review process by these institutions would have already resulted in the MNHRC being suspended or expelled for it has always acted as a smokescreen for the military’s crimes since its inception. Expulsion or suspension of the MNHRC at this time will be the most responsible action from international and regional human rights bodies.”

**Shanna Priangka Ramadhanti, Coordinator of ANNI, said:** “Myanmar and regional civil society have and will continue to engage in constructive dialogue with SEANF, APF and GANHRI on the issue of MNHRC. We urgently call on the bodies as well as its NHRI members to take the principled stance of disengaging from the MNHRC, and take concrete actions to avoid legitimizing the military junta and support the people of Myanmar as they work towards a genuine federal democracy.”

**Zee Pe, Director of Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization, said:** “The MNHRC’s unabashed undermining of the Spring Revolution and the Myanmar people’s will for federal democracy shows it never truly represented or served the people and advocated for their rights.

“Regional and international human rights actors must honor and provide concrete support for Myanmar civil society’s campaign for a Union Human Rights Commission to allow for a genuine protection of human rights of the Myanmar people.”

**Jack Musgrave, Research Consultant of Progressive Voice, said:** “Following the failed coup, the MNHRC has transformed itself from a biased incompetent institution and an appeaser of the military, into a brazen propaganda partner to cover up the junta’s incessant horrific crimes.

“To continue to entertain the MNHRC as a viable and credible institution is tantamount to allowing the junta to continue its grave crimes against the Myanmar people with complete impunity.”

- The analysis paper can be downloaded [here](#)

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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 organizations and human rights defenders working on issues related to NHRIs. ANNI currently has 33 member organizations 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 GANHRI. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) has served as the Secretariat of ANNI since its establishment in 2006. More information at <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>*

### **Background**

Since the coup attempt was launched on 1 February, 2021, the Myanmar military junta has waged a nationwide campaign of terror against the people of Myanmar and the country is on a path towards a full-blown civil war. The Myanmar military junta has reached unprecedented depths of cruelty in its war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the wake of the failed coup, regional and Myanmar civil society [called](#) on the MNHRC to investigate all allegations of human rights violations and exercise its power to ensure the protection of civilians.

Yet, the Commission has consistently failed to fulfill its mandate in condemning the junta’s atrocious crimes. Instead, it has allowed itself to be the junta’s mouthpiece to conceal its ongoing inhumane brutality in Myanmar from the international community and discourage probe and criticism. The MNHRC cooperatively erased traces of the junta’s gross violations by announcing “successful” prison inspections and welcoming prisoners releases without addressing the severe abuses of fundamental freedoms inside prison, including routine torture, sexual and gender-based violence, executions, deprivation of food and water, and crowded and unsanitary living conditions, calling the attempted coup leader, Min Aung Hlaing’s [action](#) “humanitarian”.

In response to the MNHRC’s continuous complicity in the junta’s barbaric actions, Myanmar and regional civil society and networks have strongly recommended international actors to disengage with the MNHRC completely. The call has been emphasized to APF, SEANF and GANHRI to no avail. The Working Group has also proposed an establishment of a new commission through the Union Human Rights Commission Law under the National Unity Government, legitimate government of Myanmar. Most recently, the Working Group and ANNI [condemned](#) the GANHRI’s invitation to the MNHRC to its Annual Meeting in March 2023.

The MNHRC, since its inception in 2011, has constantly fallen short on the protection and promotion of human rights as a national human rights institution. Throughout the last decade, it has shun its duty to protect people in power from international criticisms for human rights violations by failing to address conflict in ethnic areas, the Rohingya genocide, sexual and gender-based violence in ethnic areas and many other institutional failings. The MNHRC has not been able to reach full compliance with the Paris Principles, the international standard that guides national human rights institutions, scoring only a ‘B’ status accreditation (partial compliance) from GANHRI.