

June 22, 2023 | Myanmar

ASEAN's planned military exercises led by Myanmar junta and Russian regime will deepen its complicity in the junta's international crimes

Justice For Myanmar calls on the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) to immediately cancel Myanmar junta and Russia led counter terrorism military exercises to be held in the coming months.

The drills are being organised by the ADMM-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter Terrorism, co-chaired by the Myanmar military junta and the Russian regime, and will involve a tabletop exercise in Myanmar in August and a field training exercise in Russia in September.

The working group held its final planning conference for the exercises in June in Khabarovsk, Russia, attended by all members of ASEAN and dialogue partners China and India. The USA, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand boycotted the meeting.

The exercises will involve military training that coordinates a response to a simulated terrorist attack and will help the Myanmar military build the capabilities of elite troops engaged in a campaign of terror against the people.

ASEAN's practical assistance and support for the training of Myanmar junta troops makes the bloc further complicit in ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since the military's illegal coup attempt on February 1, 2021, the junta has murdered more than 3,600 people, arbitrarily arrested more than 23,000, committed indiscriminate airstrikes and shelling, torture, and sexual violence, and displaced at least 1.5 million people.

Since 2021, ADMM's counter terrorism working group has been led by Major General Aung Myo Thant, Deputy Chief of the Myanmar military's Armed Forces Training, and Major General Grigorii Tiurin of the Operational and Strategic Command of Russia's Eastern Military District. Their co-chairpersonship ends this year.

The working group is also used by the junta for propaganda purposes and to seek regional support for its attacks against the legitimate National Unity Government (NUG), People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations.

For instance, a junta propaganda article on the December 2021 ASEAN counter terrorism meeting, hosted by the junta, reported on Aung Myo Thant's speech, "highlighting... the terrorist activities of NUG and PDF, electoral fraud which led to the state of emergency declared by Tatmadaw to maintain the State affairs, efforts of Tatmadaw in various ways to peacefully find a solution on vote-rigging, the NLD government's multiple rejections on the discussion and its intent to form a new government with controversial election results."

ASEAN has not only failed to take action in support of human rights and democracy in Myanmar but is actively aiding the junta's criminal conduct through direct military support like the planned military exercises. This makes ASEAN complicit in the junta's atrocity crimes.

ASEAN is also impeding effective international action to resolve the crisis in Myanmar by acting as an institutional barrier that supports the junta by providing cover for its members and dialogue partners to enhance military cooperation and avoid taking action to protect the human rights of the Myanmar people and end the military's impunity.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "If the world needs anymore evidence that the Five Point Consensus has failed, ASEAN's training of junta troops in "counter terrorism" should be the nail in the coffin.

"ASEAN's planned training of junta troops will make the bloc further complicit in the junta's violent attacks against the Myanmar people.

"Rather than helping to resolve the Myanmar crisis, ASEAN's actions are worsening it and causing real harm.

"The fact these military exercises are planned is testament to the shocking failure of Indonesia as ASEAN chair to uphold basic principles of democracy and human rights.

"ASEAN must immediately cancel the exercises, ban the junta from all meetings and recognise and support the National Unity Government as the legitimate government of Myanmar.

"If, under Indonesia's leadership, the exercises do go ahead, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and the incoming Thai government should boycott the exercises and stand with the people of Myanmar in support of human rights and democracy."

More information:

Read our investigation into ADMM [here](#)

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Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business and for federal democracy and a sustainable peace.