

## **Myanmar: Thailand's one-sided approach to the Myanmar crisis must end**

We, the undersigned organisations, condemn Thailand's initiative, outside the ASEAN framework, to host an 'informal meeting' of neighbouring countries affected by the Myanmar crisis.

We are also concerned about Thailand's support of ASEAN's efforts to resolve the situation in Myanmar, given that ASEAN has barred Myanmar's junta leader and foreign minister from attending its summits since late 2021. This could put ASEAN unity in jeopardy, implying that the regional bloc is not the primary forum for dealing with and resolving the Myanmar crisis.

During the 2022 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Cambodia, Thailand announced that it would be advancing dialogue in all forums to find a way to peacefully resolve the Myanmar crisis. The so-called 'Track 1.5' dialogue is one such attempt.

Track 1.5 is a series of informal meetings which began in March 2023. It intends to open additional channels of dialogue among stakeholders affected by the Myanmar crisis. It also seeks to foster mutual trust and confidence.

On 18 June 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Thailand will host an informal meeting among countries affected by the Myanmar crisis on 19 June. The meeting would be the third of its kind, following the ones held in Thailand and India in March and April 2023, respectively. This third meeting includes a mix of government officials participating in an unofficial capacity as well as members of the academia.

Notably, the meeting previously held in India was hosted and attended by representatives from China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Indonesia. While the Myanmar military junta was able to attend the said meeting, the National Unity Government (NUG)–Myanmar's elected civilian government–was not even invited.

'Despite the fact that this informal meeting could be interpreted as a bid by neighbouring countries to demonstrate their convening power by jointly tackling an issue-specific regional coalition, FORUM-ASIA cannot accept this exclusive regional platform for countries that share a border with Myanmar and have been affected in some way by the crisis, especially if relevant key stakeholders

representing the actual voice of the Myanmar people are not included,' said Mary Aileen Diez- Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

Thailand's attempt to re-engage with Myanmar's military rulers through an invitation to participate in the Track 1.5 meeting could be interpreted as an endorsement and legitimisation of the junta's brutal actions. It also undermines the people's long struggle for democracy, human rights, and justice. The one-sided initiative made by Thailand has also been publicly rejected by the Government of Indonesia—as the current Chair of ASEAN 2023—and by the Government of Malaysia for not only threatening the unity of ASEAN but also for worsening the geopolitical tensions in the region.

We disagree with Thailand's outgoing Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Don Pramudwina, who stated that countries that did not attend the meeting should thank Bangkok for its "track 1.5" diplomatic initiative that brings together government and academia. If there is an intent to resolve the Myanmar crisis, the discussion must be inclusive and not limited to one side.

We condemn Thailand's decision to invite the Myanmar military junta to participate in the discussion while also dismissing the NUG and other representatives who genuinely represent the people of Myanmar. Without intervention, Thailand's approach would only legitimise the Myanmar military's brutality and prolong the suffering of civilians.

We act in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and the country's civil society organisations (CSOs). We fully support their pursuit of justice and accountability.

In doing so, FORUM-ASIA—in cooperation with Myanmar and Thailand CSOs—demands the following:

1. The cancellation of the track 1.5 dialogue;
2. Convene inclusive and meaningful consultation with legitimate stakeholders of Myanmar, namely the National Unity Government (NUG), the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), and civil society;
3. Immediately move away from the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus and create a more robust and tangible action to stop the military junta's violence and atrocity crimes;
4. For the international community to come together in demanding justice and accountability for Myanmar and its people

## **Signatories**

Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Komisi untuk Orang Hilang & Korban Tindak Kekerasan (KontraS)

## **About FORUM-ASIA:**

**The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)** is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)

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