



Press Statement

Pro-democracy Groups Applaud Australian Visa Ban on Shan United Over Human Rights Concerns, Call for More Sanctions

[Sydney, 1 December 2023] - Myanmar Campaign Network (MCN), Justice For Myanmar (JFM), the Australian Coalition for Democracy in Burma (ACDB), and Global Myanmar Spring Revolution (GMSR) commend the decision by the Australian Government to deny visas to the Myanmar football club Shan United. The decision comes after a strong push from the organisations, which cited grave concerns over the club's associations with individuals and entities connected to the Myanmar military and human rights violations.

This action prompted Australia to bar Shan United's entry for their Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Cup match against Sydney team the Macarthur Bulls, initially slated for November 30 in Australia, leading to the match's relocation to a venue in Bangkok.

MCN, JFM, ACDB, and GMSR urged Australian ministers to deny visas to Shan United players and officials, raising concerns about the club's owner, Wa Minn Group of Companies, and its sponsor, Kanbawza Group of Companies (KBZ Group).

Myanmar Investment Commission data released by Distributed Denial of Secrets shows Wa Minn Group of Companies and its owner, Kun Naung Myint Wai, hold permits for two property development projects in partnership with the Myanmar military: one with Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), a military conglomerate sanctioned by Australia, and one with the Office of the Quartermaster General of the Myanmar Army, which has been sanctioned by the US, UK, EU, and Canada.

KBZ Group is a crony conglomerate that donated a total of US\$4.7 million to the Myanmar military and the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State (UEHRD) during the Rohingya genocide, according to the [UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#). The Fact-Finding Mission recommended a criminal investigation against officials of KBZ Group as a result of the donations, stating that they made 'a substantial and direct contribution to the commission of the crime against humanity of "other inhumane acts"'.

MCN and JFM have pressed for sanctions against these companies and related individuals.

Myanmar Campaign Network Campaign Manager Tasneem Roc, said, "Australia's denial of visas sends a powerful message that those implicated in human rights violations will not be granted a platform or support. Further sanctions action is needed to show support for the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar."

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung said, "Australia's denial of visas to Shan United is welcome but more needs to be done. Australia should urgently impose more targeted sanctions against the illegal junta's sources of funds, arms, equipment and jet fuel, and catch up with the sanctions already imposed by its allies."

Australian Coalition for Democracy in Burma spokesperson Peter Murphy said, "While we welcome Australia's decision to ban visas for Shan United players and officials, Football Australia and ultimately FIFA bear a crucial responsibility to uphold human rights within international football. States, entities or individuals found guilty of human rights abuses should be banned."

Global Myanmar Spring Revolution Spokesperson Mon Zin said, "This visa ban marks progress towards justice, but it stirs mixed emotions for us, the youth. We long for a Myanmar free from the junta's oppression, with opportunities for all. We imagined celebrating our soccer stars in Sydney, a moment of pride. However until the world opposes the junta's cruelty, our hopes remain unfulfilled. Let this ban resound as a call for justice, fuelling our unwavering struggle for a liberated Myanmar!"

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