

Joint statement: Myanmar must lift internet restrictions following devastating earthquake

Monday March 31, 2025

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, strongly condemn the Myanmar military for continuing to impose communication blackouts, including internet shutdowns, following Myanmar's worst earthquake in history. We call for restrictions on internet services, including social media platforms and news media websites, to be immediately lifted.

On March 28, 2025, Myanmar experienced a magnitude 7.7 earthquake, the strongest ever recorded in the country's history, impacting at least 67 townships. The epicenter was in Sagaing city, near Mandalay, the central part of the country. The most affected areas include Sagaing, Mandalay, and the country's capital, Naypyitaw. The death toll has risen to more than 2,000 as of March 31 and continues to climb.

However, despite this dire situation and the urgent need for emergency rescue efforts to save those trapped under the rubble, as of this announcement — more than 48 hours after the earthquake — the Myanmar military has still not lifted its internet shutdown orders and various internet restrictions, which are essential for coordinating live-saving emergency responses.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Myanmar military's ongoing crackdown on communication services following such a devastating disaster, showing a blatant disregard for the threat imposed on civilian lives. **We demand** the immediate and unconditional restoration of internet and communications services to ensure full access, as well as the lifting of any restrictions on people's rights to information. **We call on** the military to be held accountable for all loss of life and suffering caused by these various internet restrictions.

Since they took power four years ago, the junta has proved itself to be one of the world's worst abusers of digital repressions. Based on the data collected by Myanmar digital rights groups, the military's internet shutdowns orders have impacted over 100 townships, representing almost a third of the country, including the areas most severely affected by the recent earthquake. In addition, the "firewall" system installed by the junta in 2024 continues to block access to all major social media, news sites and other public information sources, even restricting the use of VPNs. This forces people to search for open VPNs, even in this dire moment. Combined with power outages and damage to telecommunications infrastructure caused by the earthquake, people in Myanmar are facing unprecedented communications disruptions. Moreover, the various restrictions imposed on people's access to information since 2021, including revoking newspapers licenses, blocking many news websites, arresting and killing journalists, are now obstructing real-time information on the earthquake's impact, delaying rescue efforts and contributing to preventable deaths.

We condemn the military and its actions in the strongest possible terms, and demand the following from Military Chief Min Aung Hlaing and his forces:

1. **Restore internet access immediately across the country.** Cutting off connectivity in the wake of a humanitarian crisis is a deliberate act of harm. All remaining internet shutdowns must be lifted now.
2. **Lift all internet censorship measures**, including the “firewall” systems on internet gateways, which force people to rely on VPNs that slow down already limited bandwidth, disturbing rescue efforts where every second counts.
3. **End all restrictions on media and media freedom.** Immediately lift any restrictions on journalists and stop disrupting their work via measures such as threats and arrests.
4. **Stop all military oppression immediately and unconditionally**, including forced conscription, arbitrary arrests, executions, threats, and airstrikes. **These actions have hindered emergency relief efforts and caused the loss of more lives.**
5. **The military council must take full accountability for imposing internet shutdowns and restricting public access to information during the earthquake.** These actions not only disrupted the flow of critical information but also led to preventable deaths by hindering timely rescue efforts. The loss of lives and widespread suffering caused by these deliberate restrictions are solely the responsibility of the military council.

We call on the international community, governments, UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and tech companies to

1. **Pressure the junta to lift any ongoing internet shutdowns and internet restrictions** so that people can seek urgent help and communicate with the outside world.
2. **Pressure the junta** to end restrictions on public access to information and media freedom as per international access to information and media protocols.
3. **Support emergency connectivity solutions to bypass internet shutdowns through local groups** and ensure that affected communities can communicate.
4. **Ensure** that emergency aid, including support with emergency communication, does not fall into military hands to be misused and abused as a tool for oppression.

Restore internet access now — before countless more people perish needlessly.

Signatories

A collective of Myanmar, regional, and international digital rights organizations

Contact:

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List of signatories:

1. 5/ of Zaya State Strike
2. A-Yar-Taw People Strike
3. Access Now
4. Activate Rights (Bangladesh)
5. Afia-Amani Grands-Lacs
6. All Aung Myay Thar San Schools Strike Force
7. Alliance of Students' Union – Yangon (ASU-Yangon)
8. Alternatives (Montreal)
9. Alternative Solutions for Rural Communities (ASORCOM)
10. Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon-AJAY
11. Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
12. Association Suisse-Birmanie
13. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
14. Ayeyarwady Youth Network
15. Basic Education Worker Unions – Steering Committee (BEWU-SC)
16. Burma Academy
17. Burma Podcast Network
18. CAN - Myanmar
19. CDM Medical Network (CDMMN)
20. Centre for Independent Journalism (Malaysia)
21. Central European Institute of Asian Studies
22. Chaung Oo Township Youth Strike Committee
23. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
24. Civil Information Network (CIN)
25. Coalition for Democracy (C4D)
26. Coalition Strike Committee – Dawei
27. Data Ethnics PH
28. Dawei Youths Revolutionary Movement Strike Committee
29. Defend Myanmar Democracy-DMD
30. Depayin Township Revolution Steering Committee
31. DigiSec Lab
32. Digital Rights Collective
33. Doh Ayay
34. EngageMedia
35. Ethnic Youth General Strike Committee (Mandalay)
36. Exile Hub
37. FORUMVERT
38. Foundation for Media Alternatives
39. General Strike Collaboration Committee (GSCC)
40. General Strike Committee of Basic and Higher Education (GSCBHE)
41. Generation Wave

42. Global Voices
43. GMSR Korea 글로벌 미얀마 봄혁명 연대 -တကမ္ဘာလုံးဆိုင်ရာ မြန်မာ့နွေဦးတော်လှန်ရေး
44. Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria
45. Info Birmanie
46. JCA-NET(Japan)
47. Kachin Student Union
48. Kalay Township Strike Force
49. Kanbalu Strike Committee
50. KengTung Youth Network
51. Korea University Law School International Human Rights Clinic
52. Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet
53. Kyain Seikgyi Spring Revolution Leading Committee
54. Kyauk Padaung Youth Network
55. Kyaukse Youth Network
56. Latpadaung Region Strike Committee
57. LGBT Alliance
58. Magway People's Revolution Committee
59. Mandalay Medical Family (MFM)
60. Mandalay Regional Youth Network
61. Mandalay Strike Force (MSF)
62. Mandalay-Based University Students' Unions (MDY_SUs)
63. Manushya Foundation
64. MayMyo Strike Force
65. Miaan Group
66. Monywa People's Strike Steering Committee
67. Monywa-Amyint Road Strike Leading Committee
68. Myanmar Fact Checking Network (MFCN)
69. Myanmar Internet Project
70. Myanmar Labor Alliance (MLA)
71. Myanmar Studies Center at Palacky University
72. Myanmar Tourism Committee
73. Myaung Education Network
74. Myaung Youth Network
75. Myingyan Civilian Movement Committee
76. Narrative Power
77. National Youth Congress (NYC)
78. New Rehmonnya Federated Force
79. Nyan Corridor
80. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
81. Nyaung Oo Youth Network
82. Nyimuyar Initiative
83. OCTOPUS (Youth Organization)
84. Open Net (Korea)
85. Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI)

86. Pale Township People's Strike Steering Committee
87. PEN America
88. Pollicy
89. Public Virtue Research Institute
90. Purple Window Counselling
91. Pyi Gyi Tagon Strike Force
92. Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales (R3D)
93. Shwe Pan Kone People's Strike Steering Committee
94. South East Asia Collaborative Policy Network (SEA CPN)
95. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)
96. Southern Monitor
97. Spring Revolution Security
98. Spring Sprouts
99. Spring University Myanmar
100. Ta'ang Women's Organization _TWO
101. Tanintharyi Youth Network (TYN)
102. Taze Strike Committee
103. Tech Global Institute
104. The Red Flag
105. U.S. Campaign for Burma
106. University of Medicine Mandalay Students' Union Revolution Front (UMMSURF)
107. University Students' Unions Alumni Force
108. Wetlet Revolution Leading Committee
109. White Coat Society Yangon (WCSY)
110. WHAT TO FIX
111. Women Alliance Burma (WAB)
112. Women Of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)
113. Yadanabon University Students' Union (YDNBUSU)
114. Yasakyo Township People's Strike Steering Committee
115. Viet Tan
116. Yinmarpin and Salingyi All Villages Strike Committee
117. Youth Development Institute (YDI)
118. 1 Undisclosed organization (due to security concern)
119. Kurdistan without Genocide
120. Organization of the Justice Campaign
121. Life campaign to abolish the death sentence in Kurdistan
122. TEDIC, Paraguay
123. May First Movement Technology