

10 December, 2021

## **UN Agencies Must Comply with their Obligations to Uphold Human Rights and Cease Lending Legitimacy to the Myanmar Military Junta**

We, the undersigned 255 civil society organizations, call on all United Nations (UN) agencies, Funds, Programmes and other Entities to cease all forms of cooperation that lend legitimacy to the illegal murderous Myanmar military junta. This includes signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and inviting junta representatives to meetings as the junta continues to callously inflict immense suffering on the people of Myanmar and deepen an already catastrophic human rights and humanitarian crisis.

The UN agencies are, through the signing of the MoUs and other forms of cooperation, providing the military junta legitimacy and a platform to fuel its propaganda machine. Partnering with the junta through an MoU compromises the UN's ability to promote and protect human rights by emboldening the junta to continue its grave human rights violations and giving it leverage to advance its craven political and military goals.

The recent decision by the UN General Assembly to reject the military junta's application for credentials at the UN is a confirmation from the world body that the military junta does not represent Myanmar at the UN. All UN agencies should now accept nominations made by the current UN Permanent Representative, Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun appointed by the National Unity Government (NUG), to represent Myanmar in all UN bodies as well as related forums and meetings.

Shockingly, on 17 November, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) co-organized a [virtual meeting](#) attended by the military junta. Other UN agencies have hosted summits, meetings, and [events](#) attended by the military junta, including the "[ITU Digital World 2021](#)", UNWTO's "[The Future of World Tourism Summit-Ministerial Debate](#)" and UNEP's "[United Nations Biodiversity Conference](#)".

The UN Charter requires agencies, funds and programmes to advance human rights as a core UN pillar. The UN must not therefore make deals with the devil by pandering to the military junta, at the expense of human rights, in exchange for "access". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) must also guide a rights-based approach in all UN programming, with human rights due diligence and the "do no harm" principle placed at the core of all operations as called for by the UN Secretary-General. This is essential to respecting and protecting the human rights guaranteed to the people of Myanmar in line with the Secretary-General's "[Call to Action for Human Rights](#)".

The Myanmar military junta has been [designated](#) a terrorist organization under Myanmar's national law by the duly elected government. Every day it commits acts of terrorism as defined by international [experts](#) on Myanmar. Since the attempted coup on 1 February, 2021, the Myanmar military has [killed](#) over 1,323 people including around 100 children, and has detained 10,815 people. Since September, Myanmar military has been ferociously and systematically shelling and [burning](#) Thantlang, Chin State, burning down over 250 houses. On 5 December, they opened fire and [rammed](#) a military vehicle into peaceful protesters, killing five and injuring dozens more in Yangon. These patterns of extreme violence and terrorist acts are being repeated by junta forces across the country. UN agencies espouse their [commitment](#) to human rights and the humanitarian principle of 'Do No Harm', yet these agencies breach their acclaimed principles of "neutrality and impartiality" when they choose to work with a military junta that continues to commit extreme terrorist acts.

Cooperating with the military junta not only contradicts UN agencies' obligations to neutrality and upholding human rights, but it is a misguided approach to assisting the people of Myanmar. The junta continues to [weaponize](#) and destroy humanitarian aid, arresting and killing those who provide it, and is forcing more and more people into displacement and destitution through continuous attacks on civilians. At the same time, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and World Food Programme have been [restricted](#) and blocked from providing lifesaving humanitarian aid, including to Chin and Rohingya people, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of the MoUs.

The UN must learn from its systemic failure during the Rohingya genocide. It must not forget that it failed to stop, mitigate, or sufficiently draw attention to violence that was laid out by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission which concluded that the leaders of the Myanmar military should be investigated and prosecuted for crimes they committed against the Rohingya, including genocide and crimes against humanity. The UN agencies in Myanmar chose to keep quiet about the genocidal atrocities being committed in Rakhine State in the hope of maintaining access and continuing their programs, [contributing](#) to a worsening human rights situation in the long term. Such systemic failures by the UN, as detailed in the [Rosenthal report](#), must not continue to be repeated over and over while the people of Myanmar put their lives at risk in defiance of the military junta. The UN Resident Coordinator in Myanmar is risking yet another repetition of these systemic failures of the UN in Myanmar, failing to regularly and publicly speak on the situation on the ground. The Resident Coordinator must immediately consult with the NUG and Myanmar civil society in responding to the crisis.

It is imperative to deliver humanitarian aid to those most in need, without placing further risks to human security. The realignment of UN programming forced by the failed coup presents an opportunity to the UN Country Team to develop a new common Human Rights Strategy that identifies Myanmar civil society, ethnic organizations and the NUG – the sole and legitimate government of Myanmar - as key implementing partners. The UN must meet with the NUG and provide cross-border aid through local humanitarian and civil society organizations. Ethnic health organizations and civil society organizations operating in conflict areas as well as newly established networks across the country have the experience and capacity to deliver aid effectively and have gained the confidence of the people and the infrastructure to make this a reality.

The attempted coup has led to the Spring Revolution, a nationwide movement of diverse groups including workers, labor unions, ethnic people, educators, medical professionals, women, LGBTIQ, police, military personnel and civil society to finally free the country from the military's oppression. The Spring Revolution is succeeding. For nearly eleven months, the junta has been unable to gain control and power over the country. The UN must stand with the people of Myanmar and support their struggle – in solidarity.

In line with the June 2021 UN General Assembly [resolution](#), UN agencies must clearly show support for democracy and the will of the people of Myanmar, and call for the end of the junta's violence against civilians and peaceful protesters and the immediate release of political prisoners.

The military junta is not a partner to solve the humanitarian crisis, as they are the root cause of this crisis.

The UN must not continue to fail the people of Myanmar but deliver on its human rights obligations as its paramount consideration and on its promise to "Do No Harm".

***For more information, please contact:***

- Khin Ohmar, Progressive Voice, [info@progressive-voice.org](mailto:info@progressive-voice.org)
- Thinzar Shunlei Yi, Action Committee for Democracy Development, [acdd.burma@protonmail.com](mailto:acdd.burma@protonmail.com)
- Naw Htoo Htoo, Karen Human Rights Group, [hoothu@khr.org](mailto:hoothu@khr.org)
- Nai Aue Mon, Human Rights Foundation of Monland, [auemon@rehmonnya.org](mailto:auemon@rehmonnya.org)

***Signed by 255 civil society organizations:***

1. 8888 Generation (New Zealand)
2. Action Committee for Democracy Development
3. Advocates for Public Interest Law
4. Ah Nah: Conversations with Myanmar Team
5. Albany Karen community, Albany, NY
6. All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress
7. All Burma Democratic Face in New Zealand
8. ALTSEAN-Burma
9. America Rohingya Justice Network
10. American Baptist Churches USA
11. Anti-Junta Mass Movement Committee
12. Arakan Institute for Peace and Development
13. Arakan Rohingya Union
14. Arizona Kachin Community
15. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights
16. Asia Democracy Network
17. Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
18. Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition
19. Asian Companions Against Brutality
20. Asian Dignity Initiative
21. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
22. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
23. Association for Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief in Vietnam (AAFoRB-Vn)
24. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
25. Association Suisse-Birmanie
26. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
27. Auckland Kachin Community NZ
28. Auckland Zomi Community
29. AwazCDS-Pakistan
30. Backpack Health Workers Team
31. Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India
32. Baptist World Alliance
33. Blood Money Campaign
34. Boat People SOS

35. Burma Action Ireland
36. Burma Campaign UK
37. Burma Human Rights Network
38. Burma Medical Association
39. Burma Task Force
40. Burmese American Millennials
41. Burmese Democratic Forces
42. Burmese Rohingya Association of North America
43. Burmese Rohingya Community of Georgia
44. Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
45. Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organisation New Zealand
46. Burmese Women's Union
47. Busan Solidarity Network for Democracy in Myanmar
48. Bytes For All, Pakistan
49. Calgary Karen Community Association (CKCA)
50. California Kachin Community
51. Campaign for a New Myanmar
52. Central European Institute of Asian Studies
53. Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia
54. Changjak21
55. Chin Community of Auckland
56. Chin Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT)
57. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
58. Coalition to Abolish Modern-day Slavery in Asia (CAMSA)
59. Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam
60. COVIL
61. CRPH Funding Ireland
62. CRPH/NUG Supporters Ireland
63. Dalit Foundation
64. Dallas Kachin Community
65. Decency & Clarity
66. Democracy for Myanmar - Working Group (NZ)
67. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization -DPW
68. Ecumenical Youth Council in Korea
69. Edmonton Karen Community Youth Organization
70. Education Community Woorijari Social Cooperation
71. Educational Initiatives Myanmar
72. Equality Myanmar
73. European Karen Network
74. Federal Myanmar Benevolence Group (NZ)
75. Florida Kachin Community
76. Free Burma Action Bay/USA/Global
77. Free Myanmar Campaign USA/BACI
78. Freedom for Burma
79. Freedom, Justice, Equality for Myanmar
80. Future Light Center
81. Future Thanlwin
82. Georgia Kachin Community

83. Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy (GM4MD)
84. Green Party Korea International Committee
85. Gwanak Education Community MODU
86. Houston Kachin Community
87. Human Rights Development for Myanmar
88. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
89. IMPARSIAL, Indonesia
90. Incorporated Organization Shilcheon Bulgyo
91. Info Birmanie
92. Initiatives for International Dialogue
93. Institute for Asian Democracy
94. Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (I-GMAP)
95. International Campaign for the Rohingya
96. International Child Rights Center (InCRC)
97. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
98. International Karen Organisation
99. International Ministries - American Baptist Foreign Mission Society
100. International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
101. Iowa Kachin Community
102. Justice for Myanmar (JFM)
103. Kachin American Community (Portland – Vancouver)
104. Kachin Community of Indiana
105. Kachin Community of USA
106. Kachin National Organization USA
107. Kachin Women’s Association Thailand
108. Karapatan Alliance Philippines
109. Karen American Association of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
110. Karen Association Ireland
111. Karen Association of Huron, SD
112. Karen Community of Akron, OH
113. Karen Community of Austin, Texas
114. Karen Community of Canada (KCC)
115. Karen Community of Czech Republic
116. Karen Community of Finland
117. Karen Community of Hamilton
118. Karen Community of Iowa, IA
119. Karen Community of Ireland
120. Karen Community of Israel
121. Karen Community of Kansas City, KS & MO
122. Karen Community of Kitchener & Waterloo
123. Karen Community of Leamington K
124. Karen Community of Lethbridge
125. Karen Community of London
126. Karen Community of Minnesota, MN
127. Karen Community of Ottawa
128. Karen Community of Regina
129. Karen Community of Saskatoon
130. Karen Community of Thunderbay

131. Karen Community of Toronto
132. Karen Community of Windsor
133. Karen Community of Winnipeg
134. Karen Community Society of British Columbia (KCSBC)
135. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
136. Karen Human Rights Group
137. Karen Organization of America
138. Karen Organization of Illinois, IL
139. Karen Peace Support Network
140. Karen Rivers Watch
141. Karen Swedish Community (KCS)
142. Karen Thai Group
143. Karen Women's Organization
144. Karen Youth Education Pathways
145. Karen Youth Networks
146. Karen Youth of Norway
147. Karen Youth of Toronto
148. Karen Youth Organization
149. Karenni Civil Society Network
150. Karenni Human Rights Group
151. Karenni National Women's Organization
152. Karenni Society New Zealand
153. Keng Tung Youth
154. Kentucky Kachin Community
155. Kijamii Table
156. Korea Christian Solidarity for Democracy in Myanmar
157. Korea Karen Organization
158. Korea Karen Youth Organization
159. Korean Civil Society in Solidarity with the Rohingya
160. Korean Civil Society in Support of Democracy in Myanmar
161. Korean Dentists Association for Healthy Society, Busan-Kyungnam branch
162. Korean House for International Solidarity
163. Korean Solidarity for Overseas Community Organization
164. La Communauté Birmanie de France
165. LA Rohingya Association
166. Louisiana Kachin Community
167. Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), Maldives
168. Maryland Kachin Community
169. May 18 Seoul Memorial Society
170. Michigan Kachin Community
171. Migrant Health Association in Korea WeFriends
172. MINBYUN - Lawyers for a Democratic Society International Solidarity Committee
173. Minnesota Kachin Community
174. Myanmar Accountability Project
175. Myanmar Advocacy Coalition
176. Myanmar Doctors for Human Rights Network
177. Myanmar Engineers - New Zealand
178. Myanmar Family Community Ireland (MFCI)

179. Myanmar Gonye (New Zealand)
180. Myanmar Hindu Union
181. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
182. Myanmar Students' Union in New Zealand
183. National Clergy Conference for Justice and Peace
184. National Council of YMCAs of Korea
185. Nationalities Alliance of Burma USA
186. NeT Organization
187. Netherlands-Myanmar Solidarity Platform
188. Network for Human Rights Documentation Burma (ND-Burma)
189. Never Again Coalition
190. New Bodhisattva Network
191. New York Kachin Community
192. New Zealand Doctors for NUG
193. New Zealand Karen Association
194. New Zealand Zo Community Inc.
195. No Business With Genocide
196. North Carolina Kachin Community
197. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
198. Olive Organization
199. Omaha Kachin Community
200. Oversea Karen Organization Japan
201. Overseas Burmese Christian Fellowship
202. Overseas Mon Association New Zealand
203. Pa-O Women's Union
204. Pennsylvania Kachin Community
205. People, not Profit
206. People's Watch, India
207. People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD)
208. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
209. PIDA (People's Initiative for Development Alternatives)
210. Progressive 3.0
211. Progressive Korea
212. Progressive Voice
213. Pyithu Gonye (New Zealand)
214. Pyungdung Parents Union
215. Rohingya Cultural Center of Chicago
216. Rvwang Community Association New Zealand
217. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women on the Border Areas
218. Save Myanmar Fundraising Group (New Zealand)
219. Save the Salween Network
220. SEA Junction
221. Shan Community (New Zealand)
222. Shan MATA
223. Sisters 2 Sisters
224. Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation
225. Solidarity for Another World
226. Solidarity for Peace & Human Rights in Asia

227. South Carolina Kachin Community
228. Spouses of Peoples' Soldiers
229. Spring Revolution Interfaith Network
230. Students for Free Burma
231. Support Group for Democracy in Myanmar (Netherlands)
232. Support the Democracy Movement in Burma
233. Supporters Group for Migrant Workers Movement in Korea
234. Swedish Foundation for Human Rights
235. Synergy - Social Harmony Organization
236. Ta'ang Women's Organization
237. Tennessee Kachin Community
238. The Center For Freedom of Information
239. The Human Rights Center of the National Council of Churches in Korea
240. The Rohingya American Society (RAS)
241. The Sound of Hope
242. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar
243. U.S. Campaign for Burma
244. ULSAN MIGRANT CENTER
245. Union of Karenni State Youth
246. Unitarian Universalist Association
247. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
248. US Advocacy Coalition for Myanmar
249. Utica Karen Community, NY
250. Virginia Kachin Community
251. Washington Kachin Community
252. West Virginia Kachin Community
253. Women's League of Burma
254. Women's Peace Network
255. Wonders International