

Your Excellencies,

Re: ASEAN's response to the military coup in Myanmar

As civil society organizations from the ASEAN region, we write to you urging you to use your unique position to influence the situation in Myanmar by taking immediate measures to ensure that the military respects people's right to peaceful protests and to freedom of expression, that democracy is upheld, and the will of the people respected.

Following the Myanmar military's illegal seizure of power on 1 February, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing assumed all legislative, executive, and judicial powers under the newly-established State Administrative Council.

A non-violent pro-democracy movement has since grown nationwide, and the Myanmar authorities have responded by cracking down on fundamental freedoms. Hundreds of senior officials from the National League for Democracy (NLD), pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders have been arrested; mobile phone and Internet communications have been heavily restricted; highly repressive legislation, including a draft Cyber Security Bill and revisions to the Penal Code have been adopted; and restrictions on gatherings imposed.

The Myanmar security forces have also increasingly responded with force against peaceful protesters, using live munitions, water cannons and deploying armored vehicles in cities. Given the abuses committed in the past by the Myanmar military under the command of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, including international crimes against the Rohingya and in other ethnic minority areas, we are seriously concerned about a potentially violent response from the authorities.

We would like to recall to your excellencies the principles of the ASEAN Charter, which includes adhering to the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance, as well as the respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We also recall the recent UN Security Council statement supporting and encouraging regional organizations, in particular ASEAN, to address the situation in Myanmar.

We welcome the ASEAN Chairman's statement on the situation in Myanmar, later echoed by the representatives of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). In addition, we are encouraged by the calls made by the leaders of Indonesia and Malaysia in seeking a special meeting of ASEAN's foreign ministers to discuss the situation.

However, we urge you to go further by immediately using all diplomatic leverage at your disposal to ensure that the Myanmar military refrains from using violence and imposing further restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, as well as to establish a comprehensive response that secures long-term democratic and human rights gains.

Recent developments in Myanmar are disastrous for its people, as well as the region as a whole. They create the potential for thousands of people to flee violence and persecution, as well as a volatile regional environment.

We firmly believe that it is not only crucial, but also in ASEAN's best interests, to take a strong stance on these urgent and worrying developments. Failure to do so risks further damaging ASEAN's reputation as an effective regional body that can meaningfully contribute to a strong and viable community of nations.

We draw strength from ASEAN's productive engagements with Myanmar's military in the past, most notably in response to the Cyclone Nargis crisis of 2008. We urge ASEAN to recognize that it can be equally helpful to the people of Myanmar today as it was then.

This is the perfect opportunity for ASEAN to demonstrate its political leverage and push for positive developments.

With this in mind, we urge ASEAN to:

- Immediately hold an urgent special meeting to call on the Myanmar military to adhere to the principles of the ASEAN Charter, including the principles of democracy, the rule of law, good governance, and respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms by:
 - Immediately and unconditionally releasing all those currently arbitrarily detained;
 - Refraining from using violence against protesters and respecting people's right to privacy and information, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
 - Allowing parliament to resume, and elected MPs to fulfil their mandate without impediment;
 - Immediately restoring full access to the Internet and all forms of communications; and
 - Immediately allowing all humanitarian aid and health support to resume unimpeded.
- Collaborate with the UN Security Council and UN Human Rights Council to immediately send a delegation to the country to monitor the situation and help negotiate a democratic and human rights-based solution.
- Use your position in UN fora, in particular at the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council, to support enhanced monitoring and reporting of the unfolding human rights crisis in Myanmar.
- Impose targeted financial sanctions on the military as an institution, including its businesses and its associates in a manner that respects human rights and gives due consideration to any negative socio-economic impact on the ordinary civilian population, as recommended by the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar;
- Impose an embargo on the transfer or sale of military arms and equipment to Myanmar; and

- Use all diplomatic leverage and establish a comprehensive response to ensure long-term democratic and human rights change in the country, including by ensuring that:
 - The Myanmar armed forces end all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in ethnic minority and ceasefire areas, and that all civilians are protected;
 - Myanmar guarantees the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced communities, including the Rohingya, by lifting all arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions on their access to citizenship, freedom of movement, and access to healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities;
 - Myanmar fully cooperates with the IIMM and complies with the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ; and
 - Institutional and constitutional changes are adopted that would bring the military under civilian control and ensure accountability for human rights violations.

Signatories:

1. Alliance for Conflict Transformation
2. ALTSEAN-Burma
3. Arakan CSO network
4. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights
5. ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
6. ASEAN Youth Forum
7. Asia Justice and Rights
8. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
9. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
10. Athan
11. Backpack Health Workers Team
12. BALAOD Mindanaw
13. Burma Medical Association
14. Burmese Women's Union
15. Child Rights Coalition Asia
16. Chin Human Rights Organization
17. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS)
18. Cross Cultural Foundation
19. Democracy, Peace and Women Organization
20. Equality Myanmar
21. Freedom and Labor Action Group
22. Generation Wave
23. Genuine People's Servants
24. Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
25. Human Rights Educators Network
26. Human Rights Foundation of Monland

27. Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI)
28. Initiatives for International Dialogue
29. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
30. Karen Affairs Committee
31. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
32. Karen Grassroots Women Network
33. Karen Human Rights Group
34. Karen Peace Support Network
35. Karen Refugee Committee
36. Karen Rivers Watch
37. Karen Student Network Group
38. Karen Teacher Working Group
39. Karen Women's Organization
40. Karenni Human Rights Group
41. Karenni National Women's Organization
42. Karenni Refugee Committee
43. Keng Tung Youth
44. Let's Help Each Other
45. Maramagri Youth Network
46. MARUAH
47. Myanmar Civil Society Core Group on ASEAN
48. Myanmar People Alliance
49. Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma
50. Olive Organization
51. Pa-O Women's Union
52. Pa-O Youth Organization
53. Peace Institute
54. People's Empowerment Foundation
55. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates
56. Progressive Voice
57. Pusat KOMAS
58. Shan MATA
59. SHAPE-SEA
60. Society for the Promotion of Human Rights (PROHAM)
61. Southern Youth Group
62. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines
63. The Alliance of Independent Journalists
64. The Seagull: Human Rights, Peace and Development
65. Think Centre
66. Thwee Community Development Network
67. TRANSCEND Pilipinas
68. Triangle Women

69. Women's League of Burma