

Wednesday 1 February 2023

Unions welcome new government sanctions two years on from Myanmar military coup

The ACTU has today condemned the military coup and crimes against humanity that took place exactly two years ago in Myanmar and congratulated the Australian government for imposing new sanctions against coup leaders and military organisations.

In a Resolution passed by the ACTU National Executive, the union said:

“The junta has killed at least 2800 civilians, including more than 50 trade unionists; illegally detained more than 17,000 people; and displaced over 1.2 million people, with 17.6 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

“The junta has specifically targeted trade unions: declaring 16 labour organisations illegal; raiding trade union offices and homes of unionists; harassing and threatening trade unionists and their families; arresting trade unionists, including General Secretary of the Myanmar Industries Craft & Services Trade Unions Federation (MICS-TUsF), Thet Hnin Aung; and revoking the citizenship of trade unionists including the leader of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Myanmar (CTUM), Maung Maung.

“The economic crisis under the coup has robbed 1.6 million workers of their jobs. The rule of law has collapsed, and public executions of dissidents has resumed.”

The ACTU Executive noted in the Resolution that Myanmar’s military controls a large part of the national economy through its businesses and state enterprises and cutting off the junta’s revenue flows is key to limiting their ability to buy military equipment.

The ACTU Executive welcomed this morning’s announcement by Foreign Minister Penny Wong of the first Australian government new sanctions on the regime since the coup, including targeted financial sanctions and travel bans on individuals responsible for egregious human rights abuses in Myanmar, as well as sanctions on entities enabling the repression of its people.

The Executive called for sanctions to be extended in a bid to stop the flow of funds to the military, including:

- All businesses owned or controlled by or associated with the junta.
- All state-owned enterprises under the control of the junta, including Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).
- All private businesses owned by individual members of the junta or by senior military officers.
- All of the military’s business partners and associates assisting the junta
- Banks to prevent financial transactions involving the Myanmar military and related businesses.
- Insurance companies to block or suspend contracts with Myanmar ports.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“We welcome the Australian Government’s announcement of stronger action to support a return to democracy in Myanmar by imposing tough sanctions, similar to those announced by the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and the European Union. This is a welcome first step, and we call on the Government to expand sanctions to cover all entities doing business with and providing profit to the junta.

“We recognise the strength and courage of the people of Myanmar who are resisting the return to military rule and extend our full solidarity to the trade union movement and the people of Myanmar in their struggle for democracy to be restored.”

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