

3 February 2021

Joint Civil Society Statement on Myanmar Military Coup

The undersigned groups representing civil society firmly denounce the military coup in Myanmar which has suspended civilian government and effectively returned full power to the military.

On 1 February, the military took power and arbitrarily arrested President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, leaders of regional and national governments and of the National League for Democracy (NLD), civil society activists and public figures. This compounds the grave damage that the military has done to Myanmar's political, economic, social and cultural life and to human rights more broadly over the past 60 years.

The Myanmar military's coup follows their 2017 campaign of terror against ethnic and religious minorities, which included credible allegations of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya people, as well as war crimes and crimes against humanity in Kachin and Shan States.

The Australian Government has been a key development partner for Myanmar since 2012 and has had diplomatic relations since 1952.

Australian businesses, including mining and gas companies are currently operating in Myanmar. The Australian Government made a critical error in lifting sanctions against Myanmar military businesses and has failed to take international action against Myanmar for atrocity crimes including credible allegations of genocide.

The Australian Government must now take urgent action against the Myanmar military to support human rights, justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar.

We call on the **Australian government** to:

- Support comprehensive, targeted sanctions against the military, its leaders and its business interests and business partners.
- Suspend all military-to-military cooperation between the Australian Defence Forces and the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces).
- Use all diplomatic leverage and influence to ensure rule of law is upheld and a return to democratic norms, civilian led government and the immediate release of those men and women detained including journalists, civil society activists and MPs.
- Support accountability mechanisms and proceedings including at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The coup leader, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, along with others in the Myanmar military, has extensive business interests including lucrative deals with companies outside Myanmar, and is being investigated under international law for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Rohingya population.

We call on **Australian businesses and those with offices in Australia doing business in Myanmar** to:

- Immediately divest from any relationships with military owned, controlled or linked business and organisations, including, as long as the military controls the government, state owned enterprises.¹
- Temporarily suspend operations in Myanmar and call on the Myanmar military to allow a return to democratic norms and a civilian led government.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and their civil society organisations, trade unions, journalists, and human rights activists in their defence of democracy, human rights and peace.

Signed:

- Australian Council of Trade Unions, Australian Council for International Development, Human Rights Law Centre, Australian Centre for International Justice, Grata Fund, Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia, Publish What You Pay Australia, Justice for Myanmar, Australian Human Rights Institute, Prosecute; Don't Perpetrate.



¹ The Australian Future Fund is invested in Adani Ports and Special Economic Zones Ltd, which is doing business with a Myanmar military owned and controlled company and operates the Bowen Rail Company in Australia