

## **OPEN LETTER TO ASEAN LEADERS**

### **To: ASEAN Leaders**

H.E. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Prime Minister of Brunei  
H.E. Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia  
H.E. Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia  
H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of Laos  
H.E. Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri, Prime Minister of Malaysia  
H.E. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Philippines  
H.E. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore  
H.E. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand  
H.E. Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of Vietnam

### **CC: ASEAN Dialogue Partners**

H.E. Will Nankervis, Ambassador of Australia to ASEAN  
H.E. Diedrah Kelly, Ambassador of Canada to ASEAN  
H.E. Deng Xijun, Ambassador of China to ASEAN  
H.E. Igor Driesmans, Ambassador of the European Union to ASEAN  
H.E. Shri Jayant N. Khobragade, Ambassador of India to ASEAN  
H.E. Chiba Akira, Ambassador of Japan to ASEAN  
H.E. Lim Sungnam, Ambassador of Korea to ASEAN  
H.E. Pam Dunn, Ambassador of New Zealand to ASEAN  
H.E. Alexander Ivanov, Ambassador of Russia to ASEAN  
H.E. Melissa A. Brown, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., U.S. Mission to ASEAN

**13 October 2021**

### **Re: Myanmar's presence at the ASEAN Summit**

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned organisations, write to you to urge you not to extend an invitation to Myanmar's military junta to the upcoming ASEAN Summit on 25 to 28 October because of the military's blatant disregard for the Five Point Consensus agreed at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting and continuing refusal to cooperate with ASEAN towards its implementation.

We welcome the remarks made by the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Malaysia who questioned whether the junta should be invited to the Summit and urge the other Member States to come to the same conclusion.

ASEAN's credibility depends on its ability to act decisively and bring an end to the Myanmar military junta's relentless violence against the people of Myanmar. A lack of decisiveness and consequences for the military's total contempt for the ASEAN's leaders' agreement risks undermining the bloc's legitimacy as a key regional player that can bring peace and stability.

On 24 April 2021, the leaders of nine Member States and the Myanmar junta, represented by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, agreed on a consensus that included the "*immediate cessation of violence*", constructive dialogue among all parties, the appointment of an ASEAN special envoy on Myanmar, humanitarian assistance to be delivered to the country, and for the Special Envoy and delegation to visit Myanmar to "*meet with all parties concerned*".

Myanmar's junta has failed to respect this consensus on every single count.

Since the Myanmar junta agreed to immediately cease the violence on 25th April till the end of September [there have been 3,534 attacks](#) either on civilians by the military or armed clashes that failed to protect civilians - that's an 840% increase from the same period in 2020 (376). Thousands have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. Violent acts amounting to crimes against humanity have been documented. It is clear that junta leader Min Aung Hlaing will not stop in his attempts to crush the democratic opposition to his rule.

The military junta has also continually opposed any form of dialogue. Zaw Min Tun, the military's spokesman, recently [said](#) that dialogue between the ASEAN Special Envoy and the State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the National Unity Government and People's Defence Forces could not take place because they have been declared by the junta as "illegal organizations". The junta's [stalling](#) tactics also contributed to the delay in announcing Brunei's Foreign Affairs Minister II Erywan Yusof as ASEAN's special envoy to Myanmar.

While we note aid commitments made to the AHA Centre and delivered through the Myanmar Red Cross, it is important to recall that the Myanmar military's own actions are creating the current humanitarian crisis engulfing the country. According to the United Nations (UN), three million people require assistance. That number has tripled over the last eight months. In addition to that, there are now 20 million people living below the poverty line - nearly half the population. Yet, the military junta is weaponizing humanitarian aid; blocking the distribution of supplies, placing travel restrictions on humanitarian workers, hoarding and destroying aid, and attacking civilians, health and humanitarian aid workers.

It is clear that Myanmar's military has displayed a flagrant lack of respect for ASEAN, and in fact since the coup, it appears to have used the bloc to try to gain legitimacy while at the same time increasing its brutal reprisals against the people.

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has also warned that the opportunity to prevent the Myanmar junta from entrenching its rule could be narrowing. He has called for unified regional and international action to prevent the crisis from becoming a large-scale conflict and multi-faceted “catastrophe” in Southeast Asia and beyond.

It is time for ASEAN to act decisively. This starts by denying the Myanmar junta the legitimacy it craves, and which has been rejected constantly by the people of Myanmar. The junta has refused to cooperate with regional and international neighbors, failed to stand by the commitments it has made, and exposed to the world not only its barbaric brutality but also an inability to deal with the deepening social and economic disaster currently taking place in the country, which includes the dereliction of public health services amid the global pandemic.

Reiterating the remarks of Malaysia and Indonesia's foreign ministers, a firm united response by the other Member States is required. The Myanmar junta's actions must not be accepted as “business as usual.” They are endangering the stability, prosperity, peace and health of the region.

We therefore call on ASEAN leaders to deny the head of the Myanmar military junta a seat at the table and display to him that his callous disregard for the people, and his regional neighbors, does not come free of consequences.

Sincerely,

**Signatories:**

1. A Lin Thitsar
2. A Lin Yaung Pan Daing
3. A Naga Alin
4. Action Committee for Democracy Development
5. All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress
6. ALTSEAN Burma
7. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
8. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
9. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
10. Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
11. Backpack Health Workers Team
12. Burma Medical Association
13. Burmese Women's Union
14. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
15. Democracy for Ethnic Minorities Organization
16. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization – DPW
17. Equality Myanmar

18. FORUM-ASIA
19. Freedom and Labor Action Group
20. Future Light Center
21. Future Thanlwin
22. Generation Wave
23. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
24. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
25. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
26. Karen Human Rights Group
27. Karen Peace Support Network
28. Karen River Watch (KRW)
29. Karen Women's Organization
30. Karenni Civil Society Network
31. Karenni Human Rights Group
32. Karenni National Women's Organization
33. Keng Tung Youth
34. Let's Help Each Other
35. Metta Campaign Mandalay
36. Myanmar Peace Bikers
37. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
38. Network for Advocacy Action Tanintharyi Women Network
39. Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma)
40. Olive Organization
41. Progressive Voice
42. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas
43. Save the Salween Network (SSN)
44. Shan MATA
45. Southern Youth Development Organization
46. Spring Revolution Interfaith Network
47. Synergy - Social Harmony Organization
48. Tanintharyi MATA
49. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar
50. Union of Karenni State Youth
51. Women Advocacy Coalition – Myanmar
52. Women's League of Burma
  - a. Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
  - b. Kachin Women's Association-Thailand (KWAT)
  - c. Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
  - d. Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
  - e. Kayan Women's Organization (KyWO)
  - f. Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
  - g. Lahu Women's Organization (LWO)
  - h. Pa-O Women's Union (PWU)

- i. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
- j. Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO)
- k. Tavoy Women's Union (TWU)
- l. Women for Justice (WJ)