

Submission from the U.S. Campaign for Burma and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

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The United States Campaign for Burma (USCB) is a U.S.-based membership organization dedicated to empowering grassroots activists around the world to rally for human rights and bring an end to the military dictatorship in Burma/Myanmar. Through public education, leadership development initiatives, conferences, and advocacy campaigns at the local, national, and international levels. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization advancing human rights together with an international community of grassroots partners and advocates. Both UUSC and USCB partner with our global supporters, including thousands of Burmese dissidents-in-exile, to promote freedom, democracy, and human rights in Burma and raise awareness about the egregious human rights violations committed by Myanmar's military regime. This submission is on behalf of Burma's 125 ethnic diaspora organizations from 15 countries, as listed below.

1. How can international actors improve their response to the crisis in Myanmar?

International actors need to answer the call from and follow the leadership of the people of Burma and cease empowering, enabling, and recognizing the Burmese military junta and the State Administration Council (SAC).

2. How can, and should, governments engage and support the democratic opposition, civil society, and ethnic organizations?

- a) Firstly, governments cannot recognize or offer any legitimacy to SAC, as this would embolden the Burmese military and support the junta's illegal governance. The support of the democratic movement is important because the people of Burma have to know that they are supported in their resistance to the military.

Decision makers must also take advantage of the United States' recent genocide determination for the Rohingya¹, as this provides a channel to holding the Burmese military accountable for human rights abuses and thus the attempted coup.

- b) International actors must coordinate and implement a global arms embargo, targeted sanctions and cut off aviation fuel. This will ensure that the military's supply of deadly weapons and artillery will be cut off, preventing the loss of further lives and protecting vulnerable refugees and IDPs. There must also be a deliberate decision to not participate in meetings/events that only engage with Burmese military junta representation. International leaders, such as the United States and China, could potentially further the Burmese junta's endeavors of legitimacy. Due to the U.S. strong support for the people of Burma and China's involvement to de-escalate the situation, they are often referred to as Friends of Burma by

¹ [Burma Genocide - United States Department of State](#)

Civil Society Organizations/Community Based Organizations (CSO/CBO), Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO), and other on-the-ground organizations. However, both countries have reached stumbling blocks in regards to implementing impactful action on the junta regime.

- c) Decision makers and funders should channel funding directly to ethnic groups, EAO and CSO as they are doing on the groundwork and are the only trusted local actors. These collectives currently have very little support in their work to deliver aid to the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and, ultimately, to rebuild the country.² Absolutely no aid should be delivered through the military or its affiliated entities, whose brutal actions and attacks on civilians have caused this crisis.

3. What has the UN contributed to resolve this crisis so far? What else can be done given the impasse at the UN Security Council?

- a) It has been almost 18 months since the coup and the UN has not done much of significance. The UN Security Council (UNSC) is supposed to provide security for people, but they have not done anything apart from issuing toothless statements up until this point.
- b) There needs to be an immediate convening of the UNSC to consider a resolution to establish coordinated targeted sanctions, a global arms embargo, and a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC) – even if this resolution might be vetoed. The UNSC should also convene a public-focused summit of nations who are willing to impose what the people of Burma are asking: targeted sanctions, a global arms embargo, coordinated action to impose maximum pressure on the military junta, and cutting off flows of resources that are aiding and abetting the crimes committed against the people of Burma. There have been actions taken by 41 nations, but the actions are not coordinated.³
- c) The UNSC must bring the situation in Burma to an open debate. This will ultimately bring the conversation about Burma to a public platform and raise the awareness of what is happening to an audience that may not be familiar with the ongoing atrocities.

4. What has ASEAN contributed so far in resolving this crisis? What else can be done?

- a) Last April, ASEAN convened at a special emergency session to discuss the situation unfolding in Burma. The outcome of this session was the creation of the 5-point consensus. However, the 5-point consensus was determined with only junta representation and has proven to be a failure.
- b) ASEAN must move away from the ineffectual 5-point consensus and become tougher on Burma and follow the leadership of the United States and European Union regarding sanctions. Currently, the United States does not allow the military to deposit money in US banks nor give the junta access to funds already here. ASEAN must follow US leadership and prevent the Burmese junta from banking at financial institutions in ASEAN member states. Preventing access to financial institutions would help cut off the Burmese junta from the funds it is using to attack the people of Burma.
- c) Some member states, such as Malaysia, are already willing to step up pressure on the military. Those willing to enact stronger action can work with the other nations in the international community and their leaders to enforce stronger coordinated actions that will cut off the junta's weapons, money, and impunity.

² [Paths of Assistance: Opportunities for Aid and Protection along the Thailand-Myanmar Border — Refugees International](#)

³ <https://fb.watch/eeU7ORtyCA/>

5. What alternative mechanisms or actions could be considered to influence the situation in Myanmar?

- a) Coordinated targeted sanctions, a global arms embargo, sanctioning jet fuel and a no-fly zone have been repeatedly discussed and called for by the advocacy community and yet these alternative mechanisms or actions have not been truly entertained. Even now, actions taken in the last 17 months by individual nations are not coordinated, which greatly dilutes their impact. Only coordinated global actions will influence the military and effect change.

6. How can the international community/governments support justice for victims and provide redress for the junta's crimes?

- a) Utilizing the ongoing ICC and International Court of Justice proceedings is key to finding justice for victims and holding their perpetrators accountable. It is also crucial for scope of the current ICC investigation to be expanded to include the entire country, for example by UNSC referral. This would be an important step towards justice for the Rohingya and the people of Burma as victims are nationwide.
- b) Universal jurisdiction cases, such as in Argentina, can be filed for other ethnic groups in other nations and are a viable means for holding the military accountable for its grave crimes. These prosecutions will seek – and deliver - justice for impacted communities outside the ICC and ICJ proceedings, which can take many years to complete.
- c) Justice also looks different for different groups within Burma, i.e., gender justice for women, education justice for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and refugee youths. The international community must take into account that justice is not a one size fits all. Individual groups have been victimized differently by the Burmese junta and justice must be delivered accordingly.

7. To what extent is humanitarian aid reaching the people in need in Myanmar? What can be done to ensure effective delivery of aid?

- a) Humanitarian aid is reaching people to the least extent possible. For those fleeing to the Thai-Burma border, the Thai government and authorities are blocking aid from reaching them and are preventing those who are working on aid issues from accessing people on the ground. Inside Burma, the military continues to block any aid channels that attempt to reach people. The junta commonly imposes tight security restrictions⁴ that do not allow medicine and food to be transported to those in need. Additionally, the ill-advised recent decision by the UN and ASEAN to give the Burmese junta control of humanitarian aid disbursement only allows the junta to weaponize the aid and commit further human rights violations.
- b) To ensure better delivery of aid, the Thai government must cooperate and allow aid workers to reach impacted communities, and the Burmese military must be held accountable for its crimes. In 2021, the United States spoke to Thai authorities⁵ about cooperating to allow aid workers to tap into local channels on the Thai side in order to funnel aid across the border. Similarly, in a March 2022 letter⁶ from Congress to the Thai government, it was demanded that CSO and the UN be offered unimpeded access to Burmese refugees. International bodies must also refrain from working directly with the Burmese junta in regards to

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cxCk_AP3z3G6bbWY0zbcCN9QZPNqvfe/view

⁵ <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/thai/us-thailand-discuss-aid-myanmar-border-10202021165438.html>

⁶ <https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/senators-markey-and-merkley-lead-colleagues-in-asking-thailand-us-governments-address-concerns-with-thai-ngo-law-burma-humanitarian-crisis>

humanitarian aid. Not only does the aid not reach its intended targets, but the cooperation further legitimizes the Burmese junta on an international level.

- c) International bodies must work with local actors that have been working with the impacted communities, even before the coup. Their familiarity and knowledge with the on-the-ground situation ensures that the humanitarian aid will reach those in need of life-saving aid.

8. What protection is being given and what is lacking for Myanmar refugees?

- a) There are no protections given to IDPs and refugees. IDPs are subjected to armed clashes, bombing, sexual violence, killings, the burning of homes and villages, and airstrikes. When people attempt to flee to safety, they are pushed back by Thai authorities even when conditions in Burma are noticeably unsafe.⁷ Refugees severely lack safety and security after fleeing from their homes. Their right to seek safety has been denied time and time again.

9. What may have triggered the coup? How did the international community contribute to the environment and situation in Myanmar that eventually resulted in the coup?

- a) The election could be seen as a primary trigger. Losing their power to the people was unexpected - despite knowing that losing parliament seats was always a possibility. They also wanted to have the upper hand over the ethnic armed organizations, which would have been unlikely if the National League for Democracy still ran the country.
- b) The international community contributed to the coup by allowing the military to act with impunity- the military has committed grave crimes, amounting to violations of international law, for years without accountability.
- c) The international community was also deceived into thinking that the military changed for the better. The military never really changed, even when Aung San Suu Kyi ran the country. The military-drafted 2008 constitution ensured that the military continued to wield a significant amount of power, including by making appointments to fill a portion of parliamentary seats.

Recommendations:

1. Hold the Junta accountable by taking tangible actions, including, but not limited to: imposing immediate targeted sanctions, coordinating a global arms embargo, sanctioning jet fuel, and instituting a no-fly zone.
2. Provide immediate cross-border assistance directly to local CSO and ethnic organizations and establish a designated safe zone for displaced persons.
3. Recognize and engage with the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate government of Burma instead of the illegal military junta.
4. Exert all possible pressure through every available means, including multilateral, regional, and bilateral engagement, to ensure that the military allows humanitarian assistance in impacted areas, immediately stops offensives throughout the country, and unconditionally releases all arbitrarily detained protesters and political prisoners.

⁷ <https://www.fortifyrights.org/tha-inv-2022-05-03/>

Appendix A: List of community diaspora organizations supported the submission

- 1 Albany Karen community, Albany, NY, USA
- 2 Arizona Kachin Community, AZ, USA
- 3 Calgary Karen Community Association (CKCA), Canada
- 4 California Kachin Community, CA, USA
- 5 California Karen Youth Forum, Oakland, CA, USA
- 6 Dallas Kachin Community, TX, USA
- 7 DEEKU-Karenni Community of Amarillo, TX, USA
- 8 Edmonton Karen Community Youth Organization, Canada
- 9 European Karen Network, UK
- 10 Finland Karen Culture Association
- 11 Florida Kachin Community, FL, USA
- 12 Georgia Kachin Community, GA, USA
- 13 Houston Kachin Community, TX, USA
- 14 International Karen Organisation, Australia
- 15 Iowa Kachin Community, IA, USA
- 16 Kachin American Community (Portland – Vancouver)
- 17 Kachin Community of Indiana, IN, USA
- 18 Kansas Karenni community, KS, USA
- 19 Karen American Association of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA
- 20 Karen Association of Huron, SD, USA
- 21 Karen Community in Netherlands
- 22 Karen Community in South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
- 23 Karen Community in Syracuse, NY, USA
- 24 Karen Community of Akron, OH, USA
- 25 Karen Community of Austin, TX, USA
- 26 Karen Community of Canada (KCC)
- 27 Karen Community of Charlotte, NC, USA
- 28 Karen Community of Czech Republic
- 29 Karen Community of Finland
- 30 Karen Community of Greensboro, NC, USA
- 31 Karen Community of Hamilton, Canada
- 32 Karen Community of Iowa, IA, USA
- 33 Karen Community of Ireland
- 34 Karen Community of Israel
- 35 Karen Community of Kansas City, KS & MO, USA
- 36 Karen Community of Kitchener & Waterloo, Canada
- 37 Karen Community of Leamington, Canada
- 38 Karen Community of Lethbridge, Canada
- 39 Karen Community of London, Canada
- 40 Karen Community of Louisville, KY, USA
- 41 Karen Community of Minnesota, MN, USA
- 42 Karen Community of New Bern, NC, USA
- 43 Karen Community of North Carolina, NC, USA
- 44 Karen Community of Norway
- 45 Karen Community of Ottawa, Canada

- 46 Karen Community of Regina, Canada
- 47 Karen Community of Rochester, NY, USA
- 48 Karen community of Rochester, Canada
- 49 Karen Community of Rock Island, IL, USA
- 50 Karen Community of Saskatoon, Canada
- 51 Karen Community of Syracuse, USA
- 52 Karen Community of Thunderbay, Canada
- 53 Karen Community of Toronto, Canada
- 54 Karen Community of Windsor, Canada
- 55 Karen Community of Winnipeg, Canada
- 56 Karen Community Society of British Columbia, Canada
- 57 Karen Organization of America, USA
- 58 Karen Organization of Illinois, IL, USA
- 59 Karen Society of Buffalo, Buffalo, NY, USA
- 60 Karen Society of Nebraska, NE, USA
- 61 Karen Student Association, Omaha, NE, USA
- 62 Karen Student United Association, St. Cloud, MN, USA
- 63 Karen Swedish Community (KSC), Sweden
- 64 Karen Thai Group, Thailand
- 65 Karen Youth Education Pathways, Washington, DC, USA
- 66 Karen Youth Networks, Burma
- 67 Karen Youth of Norway
- 68 Karen Youth of Toronto, Canada
- 69 Karen Youth Organization, Thailand
- 70 Karenni American Association, St. Paul, MN, USA
- 71 Karenni Community of Arizona, AZ, USA
- 72 Karenni Community of Arkansas, AK, USA
- 73 Karenni Community of Austin, TX, USA
- 74 Karenni Community of Bowling Green, KY, USA
- 75 Karenni Community of Buffalo, NY, USA
- 76 Karenni Community of Chicago, IL, USA
- 77 Karenni Community of Colorado, CO, USA
- 78 Karenni Community of Dallas, TX, USA
- 79 Karenni community of Des Moines, IA, USA
- 80 Karenni Community of Florida, FL, USA
- 81 Karenni Community of Fort Worth, TX, USA
- 82 Karenni Community of Georgia, GA, USA
- 83 Karenni Community of Houston, TX, USA
- 84 Karenni Community of Idaho, ID, USA
- 85 Karenni community of Indianapolis, IN, USA
- 86 Karenni Community of Massachusetts, MA, USA
- 87 Karenni Community of Michigan, MI, USA
- 88 Karenni community of Minnesota, MN, USA
- 89 Karenni Community of Missouri, MO, USA
- 90 Karenni Community of New York, NY, USA
- 91 Karenni Community of North Carolina, NC, USA
- 92 Karenni Community of Portland, OR, USA

- 93 Karenni Community of Rockford, IL, USA
- 94 Karenni Community of San Antonio, TX, USA
- 95 Karenni Community of Sioux Falls, SD, USA
- 96 Karenni Community of Taxes, TX, USA
- 97 Karenni Community of Utah, UT, USA
- 98 Karenni Community of Utica, NY, USA
- 99 Karenni Community of Washington, WA, USA
- 100 Karenni Community of Wisconsin, WI, USA
- 101 Karenni Society of Minnesota, MN, USA
- 102 Karenni Society of Omaha, NE, USA
- 103 Karenni-American Association, USA
- 104 Kentucky Kachin Community, KY, USA
- 105 Korea Karen Organization
- 106 Korea Karen Youth Organization
- 107 Louisiana Kachin Community, LA, USA
- 108 Maryland Kachin Community, MD, USA
- 109 Michigan Kachin Community, MI, USA
- 110 Minnesota Kachin Community, MN, USA
- 111 New York Kachin Community, NY, USA
- 112 North Carolina Kachin Community, NC, USA
- 113 Omaha Kachin Community, NE, USA
- 114 Oversea Karen Organization Japan
- 115 Pennsylvania Kachin Community, PA, USA
- 116 Rohingya American Society (RAS), Milwaukee, WI, USA
- 117 Rohingya Cultural Center of Chicago, IL, USA
- 118 Rohingya Society of Greater Nashua, NH, USA
- 119 South Carolina Kachin Community, SC, USA
- 120 Tennessee Kachin Community, TN, USA
- 121 Utica Karen Community, NY, USA
- 122 Virginia Kachin Community, USA
- 123 Washington Kachin Community, WA, USA
- 124 West Virginia Kachin Community, WV, USA
- 125 World Rohingya Organization, Jackson Height, NY, USA