

Joint Statement for World Refugee Day

End the Myanmar military junta's atrocities causing mass displacement

Ensure protection and locally led cross-border aid for displaced communities

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, we, the undersigned 128 organizations, call on the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Myanmar's neighboring countries, and the wider international community to act now to address the root cause of the unprecedented mass displacement in Myanmar and its impacts across the region: the Myanmar military junta. We urge the international community to act urgently to end the military junta's atrocities and hold the perpetrators accountable under international law through all available avenues.

We call on the international community to directly support trusted local frontline humanitarian responders in delivering much-needed humanitarian aid to displaced communities through locally led cross-border channels. We call on Myanmar's neighboring countries to allow and support such cross-border channels for these frontline humanitarian responders to deliver aid to displaced communities.

We further call on Myanmar's neighboring countries and the wider international community to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*; end the arbitrary detention, pushbacks, and deportations of Myanmar people; and provide them with legal protection, humanitarian aid, and access to essential services.

Over 2.8 million internally displaced in Myanmar by the Myanmar military junta's violence since 2021

The Myanmar military junta's ongoing mass atrocity crimes continue to intensify mass displacement and suffering across the country and beyond its borders into neighboring Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Since its illegal coup attempt in 2021, the junta's relentless violence [has internally displaced](#) more than 2.8 million people countrywide—an 87% increase as compared to 1.5 million at this time last year. Prior to the coup attempt, the Myanmar military's violence [had already forced](#) an estimated 328,000 into protracted displacement—particularly in Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Shan, and Mon States. The actual figures are likely significantly higher given reports from humanitarian responders on the ground with direct access to the affected populations.

As of April 2024, the military junta [had launched](#) at least 2,471 airstrikes since its failed coup—targeting internally displaced person (IDP) camps, schools, medical facilities, religious sites, and other places where IDPs were seeking refuge. Since late 2023, the junta has exponentially increased its use of indiscriminate airstrikes and shelling attacks against civilians, including IDPs, countrywide as a form of collective punishment against the people's democratic resistance movement to topple military tyranny. In this vein, the junta has also conducted horrific ground raids marked by massacres, sexual violence, and burning down civilian homes—destroying entire towns and displacing entire communities. IDPs who attempt to return to their homes after these attacks face the severe risk of junta-planted landmines and unexploded ordnances.

Since February of this year, the junta's forced conscription has further exacerbated mass displacement, as the junta desperately seeks to fill its ranks, including through violent abductions of young adults off the street. With their lives on the line, countless young adults have been forced to flee either to resistance-controlled areas or across international borders to avoid being forced to take up arms for the junta.

Myanmar refugees in neighboring countries lack protection and face deplorable conditions

For the thousands of Myanmar people crossing international borders to seek safety from the junta's violence, protection remains far from guaranteed. In addition to facing arbitrary arrest and detention, many Myanmar people have been pushed back or otherwise forcibly returned to Myanmar by neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand. This is occurring despite the undeniable

reality that any Myanmar person will face irreparable harm at the hands of the Myanmar military junta upon return.

Moreover, in many neighboring countries, Myanmar refugees lack access to legal protection, humanitarian assistance, employment, formal education, healthcare, and other essential services. Forced to live in the shadows, countless Myanmar people seeking safety across the region are instead denied their human dignity and subjected to exploitation, violence, and other human rights violations with no means of legal recourse.

In Bangladesh, the deplorable, inhuman conditions in Rohingya refugee camps continue to deteriorate for the approximately 1 million Rohingya there. They face overcrowding, fires, severe food shortages, inadequate healthcare, violence, and heavy restrictions on movement, among other unlivable conditions. Many Rohingya refugees are also suffering from hunger and malnutrition, receiving rations of only [USD 11 per person per month](#) as of June 2024. To escape these horrific conditions, thousands have embarked on dangerous sea crossings every year. 2023 was the deadliest year for Rohingya sea crossings in nine years. Many of those who have survived these perilous crossings [have been met](#) by [extremely hostile local reception](#), including physical violence and hate speech.

Along the Thailand-Myanmar border, there are more than 90,000 refugees across nine camps. Today, these communities are suffering from funding cuts for healthcare and education, and continue to receive meager food rations of approximately [300 Thai Baht \(USD 8\) per person per month](#). In these camps, refugees urgently need real access to lifesaving medicine, medical facilities and care, weather-appropriate clothing, educational and employment opportunities, and local integration, among other essentials. In addition, since the coup attempt, persons displaced from Myanmar and now hiding in Thailand have been facing a myriad of challenges, including extreme protection concerns, with no option to return home.

In particular, Myanmar refugees' severely limited access to educational opportunities [continues](#) to have a devastating impact on Myanmar's youngest generations. Formal education for Myanmar refugees, including formal recognition of ethnic education pathways, must be prioritized not only to ensure brighter futures for Myanmar's youth, but also to support the people's transition and rebuilding of Myanmar as an inclusive federal democracy.

Dire needs of Myanmar's IDPs demand aid through locally led cross-border channels

For IDPs in Myanmar, the humanitarian conditions are exceedingly dire, with millions in desperate need of food, shelter, and healthcare. Skyrocketing inflation, especially for staple foods, has significantly increased the food insecurity that IDPs are facing across the country. Many cannot return home to cultivate or harvest their crops due to the severe risks of junta-planted explosives or junta attacks. IDPs countrywide are also suffering from extreme weather conditions, nearly no access to education and livelihoods, extremely poor sanitation resulting in devastating health outcomes, and a dearth of essential supplies for survival.

In Sagaing Region, a stronghold of the people's democratic resistance movement, there are [more than 1 million IDPs](#), as the junta repeatedly and deliberately attacks villages, monasteries, and other civilian infrastructure where IDPs take refuge.

In Rakhine State, 200,000 newly displaced Rohingya [are facing](#) imminent starvation after being forcibly displaced from their towns and villages since mid-May by arson attacks and other grave human rights violations by the Myanmar military junta and the Arakan Army. At the same time, the junta's brutal, all-out attacks on ethnic Rakhine civilians have forcibly displaced entire villages in recent weeks. For all communities in Rakhine State, the military junta has intentionally ensured a [near-total](#) absence of humanitarian assistance.

Across the country, the military junta continues to weaponize and manipulate humanitarian assistance, preventing its delivery by constraining "access" for aid agencies to operate, blocking roads and waterways, confiscating aid, and targeting aid workers. As such, any humanitarian assistance through the military junta cannot and will not reach IDPs who are in the direst need.

Despite this fact, the international community—including many UN agencies and big aid organizations—continues to partner with the junta, instead of partnering with the National Unity Government (NUG) and Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs), and directly supporting IDPs through locally led cross-border channels. In late March, Thailand’s cross-border aid initiative—in collaboration with the Myanmar Red Cross Society, an auxiliary and long-time [security apparatus](#) of the Myanmar military, and with the support of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre)—[failed](#) to reach the IDPs in direst need, meet the needs of those served, and consult with local groups. Considering the junta’s systematic weaponization of aid, this initiative and any others in partnership with the junta or its auxiliaries are extremely dangerous for the human security of the communities intended to be served.

Meeting the needs of IDPs in Myanmar—in its border areas and beyond, including in central and upper Myanmar—remains possible through locally led cross-border channels, as has proven effective over the past three years. Local humanitarian and civil society groups have been on the frontlines for decades and are equipped with the years of experience, knowledge, and trust to effectively deliver aid hand in hand with local communities. Also at the forefront of these people-to-people and [Humanitarian Resistance](#) approaches—ready and able to deliver aid effectively to IDP communities—are ethnic service providers, members of the Civil Disobedience Movement, EROs, people’s administrations, and the NUG.

Calls for emergency crisis response

Once again, we are reminded that the Myanmar military is the root cause of Myanmar’s human rights and humanitarian crisis, including the ongoing mass displacement—both internally and beyond Myanmar’s borders—as people are forced to flee their homes in record numbers to seek safety from the junta’s violence. It is high time that the international community coordinated a crisis response to address the rapidly intensifying crisis in Myanmar, and support the people of Myanmar’s collective will, efforts, and sacrifices to establish inclusive federal democracy and ensure a voluntary, safe, dignified, and durable return to their homes.

On this World Refugee Day, we call on the United Nations, ASEAN, Myanmar’s neighboring countries, and the wider international community to:

- Take all necessary actions to prevent the Myanmar military junta’s commission of further atrocities, including a global arms and aviation fuel embargo, and join and expedite the ongoing international efforts to hold the perpetrators to account under international law through all available avenues;
- Cut all ties with the Myanmar military junta immediately, and stop lending false legitimacy to the military junta, including through international and regional forums;
- Recognize the contribution of, form equal partnerships with, and provide robust support to trusted local frontline humanitarian responders, including ethnic civil society organizations and community-based organizations, in delivering aid directly through locally led cross-border channels;
- Allow, facilitate, and support locally led cross-border channels for frontline humanitarian responders to deliver aid to displaced communities;
- Respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, and halt the arbitrary detention, pushbacks, deportations, and other forced returns of Myanmar people;
- Provide Myanmar refugees with legal protection, as well as access to employment, formal education, healthcare, and other essential services.

For more information, please contact:

- Tun Khin, Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK; tunkhin80@gmail.com
- Naw K’nyaw Paw, Karen Women’s Organization; nawknyawpaw@gmail.com
- Captain Mulan, Blood Money Campaign; info@bmcmyanmar.com
- Naw Aung, Defend Myanmar Democracy; communication@defendmyanmardemocracy.org
- Khin Ohmar, Progressive Voice; info@progressive-voice.org

Signed by 128 civil society organizations, including six organizations that have chosen not to disclose their names because of the junta's continued violence in Myanmar.

1. #MilkTeaAlliance Calendar Team
2. #MilkTeaAlliance – Friends of Myanmar
3. 8888 Generation (New Zealand)
4. Action Committee for Democracy Development (Coalition of 14 Grassroots Networks)
5. Ah Nah Podcast – Conversations with Myanmar
6. All Burma Democratic Front in New Zealand
7. ALTSEAN-Burma
8. Arakan Rohingya National Union (ARNU)
9. Asia Democracy Network (ADN)
10. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
11. Asian Health Institute (AHI)
12. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP)
13. Association Suisse-Birmanie
14. Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
15. Auckland Kachin Community NZ
16. Auckland Zomi Community NZ
17. Blood Money Campaign
18. Burma Action Ireland
19. Burma Campaign UK
20. Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)
21. Burmese Community Group (Manawatu, NZ)
22. Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
23. Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organisation New Zealand
24. Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
25. Campaign for a New Myanmar
26. Chin Community of Auckland (NZ)
27. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
28. Citizen of Burma Award – New Zealand
29. Civil Rights Defenders
30. CRPH & NUG Supporters Ireland
31. CRPH Funding Ireland
32. CRPH Support Group, Norway
33. Defend Myanmar Democracy
34. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization
35. Dunedin Myanmar Community – New Zealand
36. Educational Initiatives Prague
37. Equality Myanmar (EQMM)
38. Federal Myanmar Benevolence Group (NZ)
39. Free Burma Campaign (South Africa)
40. Freedom and Labor Action Group
41. From Singapore to Myanmar (FS2M)
42. Future Light Center
43. Future Thanlwin
44. Generation Wave
45. German Solidarity with Myanmar Democracy e.V.
46. Human Rights Educators' Network (HREN)
47. Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)
48. India for Myanmar
49. Info Birmanie
50. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)
51. International Association, Myanmar-Switzerland (IAMS)

52. International Campaign for the Rohingya
53. Justice For Myanmar
54. Justice & Equality Focus (JEF)
55. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
56. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
57. Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)
58. Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
59. Karenni Association of New Zealand Inc.
60. Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN)
61. Karenni Human Rights Group
62. Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
63. Kayan Women's Organization (KyWO)
64. Keng Tung Youth
65. KontraS
66. Kyae Lak Myay
67. Kyauktada Strike Committee (KSC)
68. Magway Region Human Rights Network (MHRN)
69. Mandalay Regional Youth Association (MRYA)
70. Mekong Watch
71. Metta Campaign
72. Mon Communities New Zealand
73. Myanmar Accountability Project (MAP)
74. Myanmar anti-Military Coup Movement in New Zealand
75. Myanmar Campaign Network
76. Myanmar Community Christchurch – New Zealand
77. Myanmar Engineers – New Zealand
78. Myanmar Gonye (New Zealand)
79. Myanmar Muslim Revolution Force (MMRF)
80. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
81. Myanmar Students' Union in New Zealand
82. MyaYar Knowledge Tree
83. Nelson Burmese Community New Zealand
84. Nelson Chin Community – NZ
85. Nelson Karenni Community New Zealand
86. Nelson Zomi Community – NZ
87. Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma)
88. New Myanmar Foundation (NMF)
89. New Zealand Campaign for Myanmar
90. New Zealand Chin Community
91. New Zealand Doctors for NUG
92. New Zealand Karen Association
93. New Zealand Zo Community Inc.
94. No Business With Genocide
95. Overseas Mon Association – New Zealand
96. Palmerston North Karen Community – NZ
97. Politics for Women Myanmar
98. Progressive Voice
99. Rohingya Action Ireland
100. Rvwang Community Association New Zealand
101. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas (SCOEWBA)
102. Save Myanmar Fundraising Group (New Zealand)
103. SEA Junction
104. Shan Community (New Zealand)
105. Shan MATA

106. Sisters 2 Sisters
107. Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation
108. Southern Youth Development Organization
109. Sujata Sisters Group (New Zealand)
110. Thailand 4 Burma
111. The European Rohingya Council
112. The Ladies
113. TRIPNET
114. U.S. Campaign for Burma (USCB)
115. Wellington Chin Community (New Zealand)
116. Women Lead Resource Center (WLRC)
117. Women's League of Burma
118. Youth Empowerment (YE)
119. Youths for Community - YfC Myaung
120. Zomi Innkuan Wellington Inc. (NZ)
121. မြင်းမူလူငယ်အဖွဲ့
122. သမိုင်းသယ်ဆောင်သူများ