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Myanmar Elections 2015: Human Rights Now Calls for Fair and Transparent Elections based on International Standards

1. Myanmar's general elections are going to be held on November 8, 2015. The elections will determine 75% of the members of parliament (the Hluttaw), and the new parliament will choose a president next Spring. The elections will be an historic and important step to putting an end to decades of civil conflicts and rule by military government, as well as to achieve a peaceful democratic transition.

Human Rights Now has a strong expectation that the elections will be held in a manner that ensures fairness, transparency and the rule of law based on international standards.

2. At the same time, Human Rights Now expresses deep regrets that the country will hold the elections without amending the 2008 Constitution, which still contains provisions granting the military disproportionate authority and infringing a wide range of human rights. It is also of great concern that some populations are still being left out of the process. In particular, Rohingya persons and persons of Indian and Chinese descent are denied their right to vote in this year's elections, despite their ability to vote in the 2010 and 2012 elections. In addition, according to local NGOs, around 100 political prisoners are estimated to still be detained throughout Myanmar.¹

Also, we are concerned that elections in seven townships in Shan State and 102 villages in Karen State, where complete cease-fires have not been achieved, were cancelled due to security concerns. Overall, the Union Election Commission (UEC) has announced the cancellation of

¹ [AAPP and FPPS Call for the Release of All Political Prisoners before the Signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement and the 2015 General Election](http://aappb.org/2015/09/aapp-and-fpps-call-for-the-release-of-all-political-prisoners-before-the-signing-of-the-national-ceasefire-agreement-and-the-2015-general-election/), Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), December 29, 2015, <http://aappb.org/2015/09/aapp-and-fpps-call-for-the-release-of-all-political-prisoners-before-the-signing-of-the-national-ceasefire-agreement-and-the-2015-general-election/>

elections in more than 500 villages, mainly in Shan and Kachin State.

3. Universal and equal suffrage and the right to vote (Article 21) are important fundamental rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The government of Myanmar should make all efforts to ensure its citizens' suffrage and right to vote. We cannot tolerate a situation where the national army's combat activities infringe such rights. Human Rights Now strongly calls on the government to ensure that the army refrain from engaging in any form of belligerent acts or use of force during the elections, including in the areas that have not achieved cease-fires. No one should be deprived of the right to vote in an arbitrary or violent manner.

Human Rights Now calls on the UEC to protect citizens' suffrage and right to vote and to ensure fair and transparent elections based on international standards.

Also, we call on the government and UEC to make all efforts to ensure that media and international election observers can conduct their activities freely without any arbitrary restrictions.

4. Human Rights Now also calls for an accurate counting that reflects actual votes and is promptly disclosed, as well as a prompt and democratic process based on the will of the people as shown by the elections. The dark history which saw the military regime deny the decision of an election and oppress the party elected by the Myanmar people should never be repeated. Human Rights Now strongly opposes any fraud or use of violence attempting to violate the people's will declared by the elections.