

March 18, 2021

Dear Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga

## **Joint Statement**

### **We, as Japanese Civil Society, Call on the Japanese Government to Take Action to Protect the Human Rights of Civilians in Myanmar**

On 1 February 2021, Myanmar's military staged a coup, claiming that there had been voting fraud in the November 2020 elections, which were won by the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The military detained NLD officials, including the democratically elected Suu Kyi, and it declared a one-year "state of emergency". If the coup is not lifted, the dictatorial military regime will once again interfere with civilians' human rights and democracy for a long period of time.

Since the outbreak of the coup, a large number of civilians in Myanmar, including children and students, has been demonstrating for democracy in a non-violent and peaceful manner called the CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement) in various places. In response, more than 2,100 people, including former election commission officials, democracy activists, writers, doctors, civil servants, students and office workers who participated in the demonstrations, have been arrested and detained by the Myanmar military as of March 17. In addition, violent crackdowns with weapons have been carried out in many places resulting in a large number of injured people, including children and students, as well as, according to reports, more than 180 deaths, including children, as of March 15. Furthermore, pressure on the press is increasing. In addition to the prosecution of a Myanmar journalist affiliated with the Associated Press, a number of local media reporters have been detained, and on the evening of March 8, the Myanmar military announced that it had revoked the licenses of five major media outlets in the country.

In order to prevent further human rights violations against civilians in Myanmar, we as global citizens must take immediate and strong actions against the Myanmar military.

With regard to the coup and the on-going human rights violations, the international community has been calling for the release of the elected leaders of Myanmar, and sanctions have also been implemented against Myanmar's military. In contrast, the Japanese government continues to engage in dialogue based on its existing relationship with the military, while in the meantime many civilians have lost their lives. According to media reports, the Japanese government will take measures to suspend the adoption of new Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects for the time being, but there is no mention of on-

going projects that may benefit the Myanmar military. We have to say that we have our doubts about whether this will be effective enough to protect the basic human rights of civilians in Myanmar.

We, as Japanese civil society, express our solidarity with Myanmar's civil society that is standing up to protect the democracy of Myanmar, and we call on the Japanese government to take the following actions.

**1. We strongly support the statement by the Japanese government calling on the Myanmar military to immediately stop violating the human rights of civilians protesting peacefully and to release Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD officials, and those who have been unjustly arrested and detained, and we urge the Japanese government to further demand that the Myanmar military stop all human rights violations.**

**2. We demand that the Japanese government further strengthen projects directly related to the livelihoods of civilians in Myanmar and to humanitarian and medical assistance and that it immediately suspend all other Japanese ODA, including on-going projects.**

#### **Signing Organizations**

Asia Japan Women's Resource Center

Japan NGO Action Network for Civic Space (NANCIS)

Porque

Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan

ARUN Seed

Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)

Japan National Assembly Of Disabled Peoples' International

Human Rights Now

PIECES

The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)