



General Assembly

Distr.: General
XX February 2025

English only

Human Rights Council

Fifty-eighth session

24 February–4 April 2025

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Human Rights Now, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 February 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Myanmar's Military Continues to Commit Massive Rights Violations Four Years into its Illegal Coup

As Myanmar passes the fourth anniversary of the 1 February 2021 coup, the humanitarian catastrophe has reached its worst point, with indiscriminate airstrikes on civilian areas, the targeting of ethnic groups, food insecurity, and the collapse of public and health services all reaching record numbers. Following the military's eighth extension of its illegal rule, the end of military rule appears nowhere in sight, and rampant political crackdowns on opponents continue. Human Rights Now (HRN) urges states to support effective measures pressuring Myanmar's military to end its violence and abuses including sanctions, a binding weapons and jet fuel embargo, and accountability mechanisms, as well as to support humanitarian efforts and heightened human rights due diligence standards on Myanmar-linked businesses.

1. Military Violations in Conflict

Since the coup began, Myanmar's military has routinely conducted unrestrained aerial and artillery bombardments on populated areas, resulting in civilian deaths, injuries, and destruction of civilian objects and vital infrastructure. Currently more than 6,000 civilian deaths in Myanmar have been reported,[1] with millions more severely vulnerable to starvation and health issues due to the massive displacement and humanitarian crisis. Two million are at risk of starvation in Rakhine state alone.[2]

On January 9, more than 40 civilians were killed by areal bombings in a Rakhine state village, with over 500 homes destroyed.[3] The conflict has also seen a surge in executions, burnings, beheadings and other atrocities. The military is intensifying its crackdowns and disproportionately targeting ethnic minorities. Entire villages have reportedly been razed, displacing over 3.5 million people, while access to food, healthcare, and education has collapsed.

However, despite overwhelming evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes, the international responses remain fragmented. While some nations have imposed sanctions, sanctions remain internationally non-binding and lack effective enforcement mechanisms, failing to curb the military's access to weapons and revenue.

Since August 2024, the military has also imposed forced military conscription on young civilians and barred individuals of conscription age from leaving the country, often extorting bribes to secure their freedom.[4] Despite the military recently stating that it would not draft women, there have been increasing reports of a countrywide lottery system listing conscription-age women, with families and local authorities receiving conscription lists from military officials.[5] In 2024 alone, more than 1,700 Rohingya men have been abducted from refugee camps in Bangladesh and forcibly enrolled within the military ranks of their own oppressors.[6]

2. Forced displacement and Myanmar's humanitarian crisis

Myanmar's humanitarian situation is catastrophic. Nearly 20 million people currently require urgent aid, 6.3 million of them children.[7] Military blockades and bureaucratic hurdles impede relief efforts.[8] December 2024 saw the number of IDPs reach over 3.5 million, and it is estimated that this number may reach up to 4.5 million in 2025, accelerated by high inflation and the collapse of agricultural and manufacturing industries.[9] Many of those displaced by the conflict have fled to neighboring countries already strained by refugee inflows.[10] Ethnic groups, most predominantly Rohingya, are at their most vulnerable. Thailand and Bangladesh, which host the majority of displaced Myanmar people, report deteriorating conditions in overcrowded camps.[11]

With over 3.5 million people displaced by ongoing conflict and economic collapse,[12] nearly half the population now lives in poverty, struggling to access basic necessities like

food, healthcare, and education. The collapse of essential services has created a vacuum filled by illicit activities, with Myanmar emerging as the global leader in opium and heroin production.[13] This shadow economy fuels further instability, perpetuating a cycle of violence and deprivation. Military-administered power outages have rendered access to clean water scarce, leading to a new cholera outbreak without proper access to medicine.[14] The recent devastation of Typhoon Yagi in September 2024 and subsequent floods destroyed critical infrastructure countrywide, with over 1 million impacted.[15]

The military's blockade of conflict zones, particularly in Sagaing, Magwe, and Rakhine states, has severed access to food, medicine, and clean water, triggering catastrophic malnutrition rates, while over 1,500 healthcare facilities in conflict-affected areas have been shuttered or destroyed by targeted attacks.[16] Meanwhile, the military's counterinsurgency strategy—burning villages, destroying crops, and controlling water sources—has severely impacted children, with 55% in extreme poverty and at least 40% IDPs.[17]

Indiscriminate military violence and economic hardships have significantly and negatively impacted the livelihoods of the population. Unemployment is soaring, with many workers from key industries facing reduced wages or severe decreases in production capacity and demand. Incessant bombardments have crippled the agricultural sector, with the price of rice more than doubling and the cost for a healthy diet increasing by 40% over 2023, a number even higher in conflict areas.[18] With more than a third of the county's population in need of urgent assistance, significant increases in humanitarian aid are essential.

3. Military crackdowns on civil and political rights

Four years after the coup, Myanmar remains engulfed in turmoil and a worsening humanitarian crisis, as the military suppresses all dissent with a complete erosion of civil liberties. On 31 January 2025, the military extended its illegal coup another six months for the eighth time, as it claims to prepare transparently unfair elections already continuously postponed since August 2023, destroying any credibility in the military's claims or confidence in a fair and free election.[19] The National League for Democracy (NLD), the main opposition party, remains forcibly dissolved, and restrictive election laws discourage parties from participating, posing the military to legitimize its rule through a sham process. Importantly, as long the military remains in power, the violations discussed in this statement will continue.

Since the coup began, over 28,000 people have been arbitrarily detained, with more than 21,000 still detained in prisons under dire conditions.[20] Over 2,000 custodial deaths have been reported, many resulting from torture and denial of medical care.[21] Prison conditions are inhumane, with detainees subjected to overcrowding, unsanitary environments, and rampant abuse including sexual violence and torture routinely employed to extract confessions or for punishment. The replacement of trained intelligence officers with untrained soldiers has only intensified prison brutality, resulting in a sharp increase in torture-related deaths.[22]

More than 1,840 individuals have been arrested for posting opinions on social media.[23] Since the coup began, watchdog organizations also documented over 450 nationwide or localized internet cuts by the military to cripple dissent and resistance.[24] Regions like Sagaing, Magwe, and Kachin, hubs of armed resistances, endure the most frequent and prolonged internet outages, often coinciding with ground offensives targeting civilian populations, placing them at greater risk of death and harm.[25] Such outages also obscure atrocities, isolate communities, disrupt aid flows, destabilize local economies, stifle resistance organizing, and fragment its solidarity.[26]

4. What the International Community Must Do

As Myanmar's military continues its ruthless campaign of violence against its own people, the international community must call for accountability and cease all form of business with the military that contributes further to its war efforts.

Moreover, Myanmar's military also continues to sustain its campaign of violence through international partnerships with foreign governments, such as China and Russia, and corporations directly or indirectly bankrolling its violations. Beyond state actors, multinational corporations remain complicit, with one recent investigation revealing the military's reliance on Singaporean fuel oil.[27] Since the coup, 665 instances of alleged business and human rights violations were linked with the supply chains of 187 global brands.[28] States should require companies under their jurisdiction with suppliers in or other business links to Myanmar to conduct heightened human rights due diligence. In October 2024, it was reported the EU, UK, and Canada imposed sanctions on a list of individuals and companies supplying jet fuel and equipment to Myanmar's military to sustain its war efforts, indicating the persistence of international businesses continuing to support Myanmar's military still even almost four years after the coup.[29]

5. Recommendations

HRN protests the continuing serious rights violations occurring in Myanmar, and we call on Myanmar's military to:

- End its conflict and emergency rule, restore Myanmar's democratically elected government and rule of law, and hold perpetrators of violations accountable.
- Ensure civil and political rights, access to health services and humanitarian aid, and cease its attacks on civilian targets.

We further urge the international community to:

- Support firm measures to enforce the military's compliance with Security Council Resolution 2669, including targeted economic sanctions and a binding weapons and fuel embargo;
- Strengthen and support efforts to ensure accountability for all violations, including a referral to the ICC;
- Reinforce humanitarian assistance to Myanmar;
- Require companies with business links to Myanmar to conduct heightened human rights due diligence to identify and address any business linked to rights violations.

[1] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/myanmar-un-experts-urge-course-correction-civilian-deaths-exceed-6000>

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/07/myanmar-rakhine-state-economy-collapse-starvation-fears-un>

[3] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/11/dozens-killed-in-myanmar-military-air-attack-in-rakhine-state-un>

[4] <https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/junta-administrators-soliciting-bribes-promising-to-exempt-families-from-conscription/>

[5] <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/listing-of-conscription-age-women-spreads-across-myanmar.html>

[6] <https://www.fortifyrights.org/bgd-inv-2024-07-26/>

[7] <https://www.unocha.org/myanmar>

[8] <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/23/asia/myanmar-junta-blocking-food-aid-intl-hnk/index.html>

[9] <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-december-2024>

- [10] <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/myanmar-airstrikes-kill-civilians-as-rohingya-flee-persecution>
- [11] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/8/25/what-is-life-like-inside-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp>
- [12] <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar>
- [13] <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/05/16/how-myanmar-became-the-opium-capital-of-the-world/>
- [14] <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-december-2024>; <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/life-without-power-spells-daily-misery-for-yangons-residents.html>
- [15] reliefweb.int, id.
- [16] <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/attacks-health-care-myanmar-30-october-12-november-2024>
- [17] <https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/situation-children-myanmar>
- [18] <https://myanmar.un.org/en/286727-myanmar-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-december-2024>
- [19] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/1/31/myanmar-military-extends-state-of-emergency-for-another-six-months>
- [20] <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2025-december-2024>
- [21] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/12/myanmar-un-experts-urge-course-correction-civilian-deaths-exceed-6000>
- [22] <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/myanmar-arbitrary-arrests-torture-of-political-prisoners-and-digital-repression-used-to-crush-the-anti-junta-movement/>
- [23] <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-swells-arrest-log-for-online-criticism.html>
- [24] <https://athanmyanmar.org/myanmar-communication-blackout-2021-to-present/>
- [25] https://www.myanmarinternet.info/post/yearly_report_2024_part_1-1
- [26] <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-censorship-virtual-private-network-facebook-79fb4cc0c3c4317844d0c00b0be1d9d1>;
https://www.myanmarinternet.info/post/yearly_report_2024_part_1-1;
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/myanmars-internet-shutdowns-silencing-resistance-in-the-battle-for-connectivity.html>
- [27] <https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/singapore-firm-feeds-floods-of-oil-to-myanmar-junta.html>
- [28] <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/big-issues/labour-rights/myanmar-garment-worker-allegations-tracker/>
- [29] <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-sanctions-military-airstrikes-12a6c7074229367366b0d7cc39b9d0a3>