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for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

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.

[11 August 2025]

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

The Upcoming Sham Election and Continuing Human Rights Violations and Humanitarian Crisis in Myanmar

Human Rights Now (HRN) condemns the Myanmar military's efforts to entrench its illegitimate rule through a planned sham election as well as widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Since seizing power in the 2021 coup, the military has carried out a brutal campaign of warfare and repression that has created a humanitarian catastrophe and rampantly violated civil and political rights. We call on the international community to oppose the upcoming election and to implement sanctions and embargoes on weapons and jet fuel to pressure the Myanmar military to respect its international obligations.

1. Concerns over the Upcoming Election

In late July, Myanmar's leader Min Aung Hlaing lifted Myanmar's state of emergency and reaffirmed plans to host a general election in December 2025.[1] However, all indications are that the election will be neither fair nor representative. More than 40 opposition parties have been dissolved, including the National League for Democracy, which led the previous democratically elected government.[2] Moreover, the military's limited territorial control makes it impossible for the election to adequately represent Myanmar's population. In December 2024, the military was only able to conduct complete censuses in 145 of Myanmar's 330 townships to register voters, failing to reach 19 million people.[3]

International monitors have rightfully condemned the upcoming election as a sham.[4] Thomas Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights' situation in Myanmar, has described it as a "charade and fraud." [5] The manipulated election is designed solely to provide a veneer of democratic legitimacy, enabling the military regime to entrench its illegitimate rule over Myanmar.

2. Attacks on Civil and Political Rights

Since the coup, the military has systematically dismantled civil and political rights, which also compromises the upcoming election. It has arbitrarily detained more than 22,000 political prisoners, including key opposition leaders, and more than 2,000 have died in custody due to torture, denials of medical care, or executions.[6] Activists have also been targeted, such as labor leader Myo Myo Aye and several union members arrested on July 25.[7] The military has also continued actions to silence its critics, including sweeping censorship laws to muzzle the press[8] and new draconian legislation to punish anyone who opposes or disrupts the election with up to the death penalty.[9] The military has also suspended privacy protections, enabling authorities to conduct warrantless arrests and surveillance.[10]

3. Wartime Violations

The military continues to commit grave violations in the current conflict, including indiscriminate airstrikes against civilians, recruitment of child soldiers, and abusive treatment of prisoners of war.

Since the coup, nearly 6,800 civilians have been killed,[11] and since March, the military has conducted more than 600 strikes, 94% of which occurred during declared ceasefires.[12] These strikes have repeatedly targeted civilian infrastructure and densely populated areas, resulting in nearly twice as many civilian deaths in 2024 compared to 2023.[13] For example, retaliatory attacks in August in Bhamo Township killed at least 24 residents.[14] On July 11, an airstrike in the Sagaing Region hit a monastery, killing 22 people and injuring more than 50, and over the same weekend, a displacement camp was bombed in North Shan state.[15]

In February 2024, facing growing military setbacks, the military broadened conscription by activating the 2010 People's Military Service Law.[16] Since 2021, more than 1,800 children have been forcibly recruited by the military and affiliated forces.[17] Although an internal review led to the discharge and compensation of 93 minors last year, the true number of affected children is significantly higher.[18] The military's reported treatment of prisoners of war and captives is equally alarming, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and use as human shields and for minefield clearance.[19]

4. Myanmar's Escalating Humanitarian Crisis

Myanmar is in the grips of a humanitarian catastrophe. Over 22 million people require humanitarian assistance and more than 3.5 million have been displaced from their homes by the conflict and March earthquake.[20] These internally displaced persons live in temporary shelters that are overcrowded and unsanitary, creating high risks of infectious disease outbreaks, including cholera and malaria.[21] Moreover, at least 1.5 million people have fled the country, becoming refugees, many of whom are denied official recognition leaving them unprotected and vulnerable to exploitation, extortion, and the threat of detention and refoulement.[22]

The March 2025 earthquake has severely compounded the crisis by killing nearly 4,000 people and leaving an estimated six million in urgent need of aid.[23] More than half of Myanmar's population now lives below the poverty line, and food insecurity has become widespread.[24] The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that an additional 3.4 million people have become food insecure over the past year, bringing the total to 16.7 million.[25]

Despite this mounting need, humanitarian aid funding has fallen drastically short. As of the end of June 2025, the UN's comprehensive Humanitarian Response Plan for Myanmar was only 12% funded, leaving a gap of nearly \$1 billion, and the planned addendum in response to the earthquake is only 37% funded.[26] The WFP has warned that it can feed only 20% of those facing emergency levels of food insecurity due to funding shortages, and it has already been forced to cut food assistance to over one million people since April.[27]

Deplorably, the military has continued to obstruct aid delivery. Entire regions remain under blockade, with humanitarian workers turned away at checkpoints.[28] The military has also repeatedly violated ceasefire agreements, continuing to launch airstrikes and artillery strikes that not only cause further casualties and displacement but also block vital relief efforts.[29]

5. Recommendations

As Myanmar's military continues to violate international human rights and humanitarian law, HRN calls on it to:

- Restore Myanmar's democratically elected government;
- End arbitrary political arrests and free all those arbitrarily arrested;
- End measures violating civil and political rights, reinstate and de-criminalize opposition parties, and guarantee freedom of expression and the press; and
- End the conflict, release conscripted children and cease recruitment of child soldiers, protect prisoners of war, and ensure accountability for all violations committed in the conflict.

We further urge the international community to:

- Reject the legitimacy of the upcoming sham election;

- Support the end of military rule, the restoration of functioning democracy and rule of law in Myanmar, and respect for Security Council Resolution 2669, including by supporting economic sanctions and binding weapons and jet fuel embargoes against Myanmar's military until it respects these and its other international obligations;
- Require companies linked to Myanmar to implement heightened human rights due diligence and to fully withdraw from all business supporting the military; and
- Significantly increase contributions to humanitarian aid in Myanmar.

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[12] Id.

[13] Türk, "Situation of human rights in Myanmar", 16 Jun. 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5957-situation-human-rights-myanmar-report-united-nations-high>.

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[15] UN News, "World News in Brief: Haiti funding cuts bite, civilian suffering intensifies in Myanmar, Belarus deaths in custody alert", 16 Jul. 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/07/1165412>.

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[18] Id.

- [19] Paddock, “What to Know About P.O.W.s in Myanmar’s Brutal Civil War”, New York Times, 8 Jul. 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/08/world/asia/myanmar-pows-rebels.html>; Mishra, *supra*, note 11.
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- [26] Mishra, *supra*, note 11.
- [27] *Id.*
- [28] *Id.*
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