



HRN strongly condemns the illegitimate appointment of Min Aung Hlaing as president of Myanmar

Human Rights Now (HRN) strongly condemns the illegitimate appointment of Min Aung Hlaing as president of Myanmar following a sham electoral process orchestrated by the Myanmar military. This development represents a deliberate attempt to entrench military rule under the guise of a civilian transition, in disregard of the will of the people of Myanmar and international law.

On 3 April 2026, Myanmar's coup leader and former military general Min Aung Hlaing was appointed president by a military-controlled façade parliament. Neither his appointment nor the parliament itself reflects the genuine will of the Myanmar people. The legislature is dominated by military loyalists, with the armed forces constitutionally guaranteed 25% of the seats, while the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) reportedly secured approximately 80% of the remaining seats in deeply flawed elections held between December 2025 and January 2026.¹ The establishment of a Union Consultative Council with authority over both civilian and military affairs further institutionalizes military control and consolidates power in the hands of the Myanmar military.

Misrepresented reform through amnesty

Following the appointment, the military has attempted to project an image of reform through a mass prisoner amnesty announced on 17 April 2026.² The military authorities released 4,335 prisoners³ and commuted sentences, including reductions for prominent political figures. Aung San Suu Kyi had her sentence reduced one-sixth, while President Win Myint was granted a pardon and released.⁴

However, these measures do not reflect genuine progress toward transitional justice or democratization. Instead, they appear to be strategic efforts to legitimize the illegal regime. Reports indicate that released individuals remain under strict surveillance and harassment. Myo Nyunt, the NLD spokesperson and Central Executive Committee member, was summoned for questioning shortly after the amnesty, while Win Myint's residence and those of other political figures are under heavy monitoring, with visitors subjected to strict identity checks and surveillance technologies such as the Passenger Screening and Security Management System (PSMS).⁵

Illegitimacy of the electoral process and political institutions

The election and the resulting political institutions are fundamentally illegitimate. They were conducted in an environment of repression, fear, and systemic exclusion, and therefore cannot represent the democratic will of the people of Myanmar.

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1782nk0018o>

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-free-more-than-4000-prisoners-amnesty-2026-04-17/>

³ <https://aappb.org/daily-briefing-in-relation-to-the-military-coup-1312/>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-reduces-ex-leader-aung-san-suu-kyis-sentence-her-lawyer-says-2026-04-17>

⁵ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/politics/junta-steps-up-surveillance-of-nld-after-prisoner-releases.html>

HRN reiterates that this electoral process was neither free, fair, nor inclusive,⁶ and therefore it lacks any legitimacy. Due to the military's limited control of Myanmar's territory and ongoing fighting, no voting occurred in 67 townships, more than one-fifth of the country's 330 townships, leaving millions of people out.⁷

Since the February 2021 coup, the military has systematically dismantled the rule of law and democratic institutions. In July 2025, the military enacted the so-called Protection of Multiparty Democratic General Elections from Obstruction, Disruption and Destruction Law, which criminalizes speech, assembly, and organization related to the electoral process, imposing prison sentences of three to seven years. Under this draconian law, more than 200 individuals were arrested before and during the election period.⁸ In addition, over 40 political parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD), were dissolved,⁹ and more than 30,000 political opponents, activists, and pro-democracy supporters have been arbitrarily arrested since the coup.¹⁰

Accountability and atrocity crimes

Min Aung Hlaing is implicated in grave international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide, particularly against the Rohingya population, with an existing arrest warrant for him by the International Criminal Court¹¹ and ongoing proceedings against him before the International Court of Justice,¹² and in cases under universal jurisdiction in Argentina,¹³ Timor Leste,¹⁴ and Indonesia.¹⁵ In the absence of any credible transitional justice or accountability mechanisms, Min Aung Hlaing remains subject to international scrutiny for atrocity crimes. Allowing an individual responsible for directing widespread and systematic human rights violations to assume political leadership without accountability undermines justice and sets a dangerous precedent.

Escalating violence and concern over a genuine 'peace talk'

On 21 April 2026, Min Aung Hlaing proposed a 'peace talk' with Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs), including both signatory and non-signatory groups to the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).¹⁶ However, developments on the ground demonstrate that this process is not a step towards peace. Even after the election and appointment, military attacks against civilians have intensified. Between 27 March and 2 April 2026 alone, at least 24 incidents of airstrikes targeting civilians were reported across 18 townships in seven regions, resulting in at least 22 civilian deaths and 43 injuries.¹⁷ These ongoing violations underscore that the military continues to rely on violence and repression rather than dialogue and reconciliation.

⁶ <https://hrn.or.jp/eng/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Myanmar-Elections-Statement-2025.pdf>

⁷ <https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-elections-48f9f80748a23ce4ac9d7a1ea476f1f4>

⁸ <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/17/asia/myanmar-military-election-law-arrests-intl-hnk>

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmar-junta-dissolves-ex-ruling-party-election-deadline-passes-2023-03-28/>

¹⁰ <https://aappb.org/daily-briefing-in-relation-to-the-military-coup-1312/>

¹¹ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/bangladesh-myanmar>

¹² <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/178/oral-proceedings>

¹³ <https://iimm.un.org/en/universal-jurisdiction>

¹⁴ <https://english.dvb.no/timor-leste-opens-unprecedented-case-against-myanmar-military-under-legal-principle-of-universal-jurisdiction/>

¹⁵ <https://thediplomat.com/2026/04/rights-groups-file-genocide-complaint-against-myanmars-min-aung-hlaing/>

¹⁶ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/politics/min-aung-hlaing-gives-armed-groups-100-days-to-join-peace-talks.html>

¹⁷ https://wp.progressivevoicemyanmar.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/03April2026_Armed-Struggles_Eng.pdf

The military has also broken the NCA by its coup and continued violence, failed to meet the requirements of ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, particularly the obligations to cease violence and engage in inclusive dialogue among all parties, and violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669,¹⁸ which calls for an immediate end to violence, the release of all political prisoners, and a return to democratic governance.

The international community has rejected the military's legitimization

The international community has increasingly rejected the military's attempts at legitimization. Regional and international actors have expressed deep concern over the sham election and the worsening human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. On 31 March 2026, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) condemned the appointment as a consolidation of military rule rather than a genuine political transition.¹⁹ On 27 March 2026, the United Nations Human Rights Council by consensus unequivocally rejected the legitimacy of the military-organized elections and underscored the systematic human rights violations committed since the 2021 coup.²⁰

Call to action

HRN calls on the international community to take urgent and decisive action to reject the military's and Min Aung Hlaing's consolidation of power and support the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar. HRN further calls on specific actions from the following parties.

- The international community must actively pursue criminal accountability for atrocity crimes through international courts and universal jurisdiction to ensure that those responsible for grave human rights violations are held accountable.
- ASEAN and its member states should fully and effectively implement the Five-Point Consensus, including by ending violence and facilitating inclusive dialogue among all relevant stakeholders. ASEAN must refrain from engaging with the military-led façade government at any level and should not invite its representatives to any ASEAN engagements.
- Countries that have supported Myanmar's democratization, including Japan, must maintain their previous stance; they must not recognize the illegitimate regime, nor should they resume official development assistance (ODA) or bilateral trade. The arms embargo imposed by the United States, the EU, Canada, Australia, and others, as well as economic sanctions targeting military officials and the suspension of trade with military-linked companies, should be maintained.
- Global companies should continue to refrain from doing business with military-linked entities.
- Myanmar's military must immediately cease all violence against civilians, including airstrikes and attacks on ethnic communities; end the arbitrary and unlawful arrest and detention of individuals; release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally; and pursue a genuine, Myanmar people-led and owned resolution through inclusive political dialogue toward peace and democracy.

¹⁸ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/L.24/Rev.1>

¹⁹ <https://aseanmp.org/publications/post/asean-mps-condemn-myanmar-juntas-move-to-install-min-aung-hlaing-as-president/>

²⁰ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/61/L.24/Rev.1>