

The Honorable Fumio Kishida
Prime Minister of Japan
Cabinet Office, 1-6-1 Nagata-cho,
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8968, Japan

CC:

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary, The Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations,
H.E. Mr. Kimihiro Ishikane
Members of the UN Security Council

29 May 2023

Open Letter

Re: Japan's leadership urgently needed at the UN Security Council to stop Myanmar military's atrocity crimes as Myanmar faces man-made and natural disasters

Dear Prime Minister Kishida,

We, 237 Myanmar, regional and international organizations are writing to urge you and the Government of Japan to assume a greater leadership role at the UN Security Council (UNSC) to address the further deteriorating multifaceted crises in Myanmar. As a member of the UNSC and a major donor to Myanmar, we believe that the government of Japan is well-placed to work with its allies on the Council to develop a principled, human rights-based response to put an end to Myanmar military junta's atrocity crimes.

Since the attempted coup, the Myanmar military has [killed](#) over 3,500 people and arrested over 22,700, including two Japanese journalists, who have been released. Many unjustly [remain](#) in detention. Since the UNSC resolution was adopted, at least 704 people have been killed. In 2022, Myanmar [ranked](#) among the countries that saw the most intense levels of violence and conflict deaths, next to Ukraine and [recorded](#) the highest number of violence targeting civilians globally.

The UN conservatively [estimates](#) that 1.5 million people have been displaced since the Myanmar military's attempted coup. As category five Cyclone Mocha advanced toward Myanmar and Bangladesh, the Myanmar military persisted in its [attacks](#) against civilians residing in regions along the cyclone's trajectory.

As evacuations began in Rakhine State, Rohingya were willfully neglected by the junta, and aid to the Rohingya community has been blocked. In the cyclone's aftermath, hundreds of people are dead or missing. It is vital that Japan take immediate measures to respond to the military's breach of

international human rights and humanitarian laws and ensure peace and security in the region and beyond.

In your [address](#) to leaders of the world during the 77th UN General Assembly, you spoke of “*listening not only to the big voices but also being attentive to the small voices*” and that you “*intend to take action to strengthen the rule of law in the international community*” as a non-permanent member of the UNSC – a vital position to maintain world peace and security which Japan holds until 2024.

We urge you to turn these words into action by building on the December 2022 UNSC [resolution](#) on Myanmar and adopt concrete measures to hold the Myanmar military accountable for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Japan’s ODA and Businesses: Japan must first end its complicity in Myanmar’s Crimes

Just as the UNSC resolution has done little to curb the military’s atrocities, the military have remained impervious to Japan’s statements of concern. Statements [urging](#) the military to stop the violence have little impact when Japan has yet to suspend all Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects that are currently being implemented by the Myanmar junta or stop Japanese businesses from funding the Myanmar military’s atrocities.

If Japan is to assert its leadership as Asia’s rights-respecting democracy on the world stage, it must first end its complicity in the Myanmar military’s atrocity crimes. Ties to the Myanmar military have only diminished Japan’s reputation as a leading democracy in Asia and undermined Japan’s standing in the eyes of Myanmar people who have looked to Japan for support to end the Myanmar military’s attempt to rule with violence.

Since the ODA program began, Japan has cumulatively [provided](#) approximately 1.4 trillion yen (US \$9.6 billion) in loan assistance, 360 billion yen (US \$2.5 billion) in grant aid, and 100 billion yen (US \$690 million) in technical assistance to Myanmar as of November 2021. Japan was the biggest provider of ODA to Myanmar before the attempted coup. It has yet to fully utilize this as a leverage, despite the Rohingya genocide in 2017 and the Myanmar military’s grave human rights violations since its attempted coup.

Rather than prioritizing human rights and democracy, Japan has focused on development in Myanmar, providing opportunities for Japanese businesses, including partnering with the Myanmar military conglomerates. Despite vehement civil society [calls](#), Japan has yet to conduct an investigation to respond to claims that its ODA has benefited the military junta financially.

As a result, businesses like the Yokogawa Bridge Corporation have [transferred](#) US \$1 million to military-owned Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) for a bridge construction project backed by Japan’s ODA through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) following the attempted coup.

Projects [funded](#) by Japan's ODA have also directly served to benefit Myanmar military's strategic interests, for example in the case of East-West Economic Corridor (EWC) Improvement project in Karen State, which ultimately [fueled](#) conflict along the Asia Highway (part of the EWC).

Myanmar military has also [misused](#) Japanese development aid for military purposes. It used Japan-funded passenger ships meant for civilian use for military purposes to transport troops as it committed war crimes in Rakhine State and displayed a blatant lack of [regard](#) for the Japanese government's inquiry into the matter.

Japanese businesses in the [telecommunications](#) sector, as well as [real-estate](#) development sectors continue to actively partner with the Myanmar military and entities controlled by the military junta, against UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines For Multinational Enterprises. Meanwhile, [demands](#) by civil society for ENEOS and other partners involved in the oil and gas sector to responsibly disengage, with transparency and through consultation with local communities and civil society stakeholders have been ignored.

It is vital that Japan immediately suspend all ODA currently being implemented under the control of the Myanmar military. It must begin to work closely with the National Unity Government (NUG), formed on the basis of the 2020 general elections with the popular support of the people of Myanmar, as well as Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) and Myanmar civil society to effectively support the will of the people of Myanmar to establish a federal democracy. It must divert its support towards humanitarian aid, particularly towards frontline local humanitarian actors, including community-based organizations along the ethnic borderlands.

The Government of Japan must end its complicity in grave human rights violations in Myanmar by halting its business with the military junta and its conglomerates.

Breach of Japan's Democratic Principle: Japan's Special Envoy Endorsing Illegal Election and Political Figures Acceptance of Medal from War Criminal Min Aung Hlaing

In addition to Japan's continued business links with the Myanmar military, Japan's [training](#) of military troops, and its use of quiet diplomacy [reliant](#) on a "special relationship" with the Myanmar military has abetted the further entrenchment of the military's culture of impunity.

It certainly does not help Japan's image as a rights-respecting democratic country when the current vice president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and a former Prime Minister, Taro Aso, alongside a former posts and telecommunications minister, who also serves as chairman of the Japan Myanmar Association, Hideo Watanabe, [receive](#) a medal from international criminal Min Aung Hlaing for "development, peace and prosperity of Myanmar." By staying silent on such matters, Japan further legitimizes an illegal Myanmar military that is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, including massacres and bombing and killing of children.

The Myanmar military junta is an illegitimate entity that has attempted an illegal coup and stands accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice. We are gravely concerned of the Japanese government's lack of a clear public stance in opposition to the junta's proposed illegal election, which has been further confounded by [statements](#) made by your government's Special Envoy to Myanmar, Yohei Sasakawa, in support of the military's sham elections. Japan must unequivocally stand with the people of Myanmar by denouncing the junta's violent attempts to assert its legitimacy, including through its plan to hold an election illegally.

Myanmar military's fierce [shelling](#) of the "Peace Town" built with the support of the Nippon Foundation for refugees returning to Karen State, is an indictment of the military's commitment to peace and democracy in Myanmar. The military also [killed](#) a child as they raided Ma Gyi Gan Village, Myaing Township in Magway Region on 18 April 2023, destroying civilian property, medical equipment and burnt down the village hospital built with support from JICA.

Tangible action against the Myanmar military: new UN Security Council Resolution

As you have reflected on Japan's own experience with war at the site of G7 in Hiroshima alongside world leaders this month, we hope you will also think of the people in Myanmar who are currently experiencing war, enduring atrocities by a military with a history that ties Myanmar and Japan together.

The Myanmar military junta's total disregard for the Security Council Resolution 2669, which was adopted last year, shows a need for a new resolution under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in order to enforce the junta's compliance. In July, UK will assume the presidency of the UNSC. As one of the Asian countries on the UNSC, Japan must work closely with the UK – the "penholder" on Myanmar at the UNSC – towards a new resolution that includes targeted sanctions and arms embargo against the military and a referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

We look to your decisive leadership in holding the junta accountable through a Chapter VII resolution on Myanmar adopted by the UNSC.

Sincerely,

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Yuka Kiguchi, Mekong Watch; kiguchi@mekongwatch.org

The Open Letter is signed by 237 Myanmar, regional and international organizations, including 41 organizations who have chosen not to disclose their names.

1. 8888 Generation (New Zealand)
2. Action Against Myanmar Military Coup (Sydney)
3. Action Committee for Democracy Development (Coalition of 14 grassroots networks)

4. Active Youths Kalaymyo
5. Africa Japan Forum
6. Ah Nah Podcast - conversations with Myanmar
7. Ah. La. Ka (12) Hta Khwe. Primary Education Student Union
8. All Arakan Students' & Youth' Congress
9. All Arakan Youth Organization Network
10. All Burma Democratic Front in New Zealand
11. All Religions Strike Column
12. All Young Burmese League (AYBL)
13. Alternative Solutions for Rural Communities (ASORCOM)
14. ALTSEAN-Burma
15. Anti Myanmar Military Dictatorship Network (Australia)
16. APPIKA
17. Arakan CSO Network
18. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
19. Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center
20. Asian Community Center 21
21. Asian Cultural Forum on Development Foundation (ACFOD)
22. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
23. Asian Health Institute
24. Assistance Association of Political Prisoners
25. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
26. Association Suisse Birmanie (ASB)
27. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
28. Auckland Kachin Community NZ
29. Auckland Zomi Community
30. Aung Myay Thar Zan Education Schools Strike Column
31. Aung Pin Lae Main Strike Column
32. Australian Burma society Inc.
33. Australian Coalition for Democracy in Burma
34. AWDO (Nagphe)
35. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organisation
36. Blooming Padauk
37. Burma Action Ireland
38. Burma Campaign UK
39. Burma Human Rights Network
40. Burma Support
41. Burmese American Democratic Alliance
42. Burmese Community Group (Manawatu, NZ)
43. Burmese Community South Australia
44. Burmese Community Support Group (Sydney)
45. Burmese Rohingya Organization UK

46. Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organisation New Zealand
47. Burmese Women's Union
48. Campaign for a New Myanmar
49. CAN-Myanmar
50. CDM Support Team Mandalay (CSTM)
51. Chan Mya Thar Si Township People Strike Column
52. Chin Community of Auckland
53. Chin Human Rights Organization
54. Cooperative University Student Strike Column
55. Creative Home
56. CRPH & NUG Supporters Ireland
57. CRPH Funding Ireland
58. Daung Sit Thi
59. Doh Atu - Ensemble pour le Myanmar
60. Education Family (Anti - Fascists Education Strike Columns Coordination Committee)
61. Educational Initiatives Prague
62. Equality Myanmar
63. Ethnic Youth General Strike Committee
64. Falam Chin Community South Australia
65. Federal Corner Magway Region
66. Federal FM - Mandalay
67. Federal Myanmar Benevolence Group (NZ)
68. Freedom and Labor Action Group
69. Free Rohingya Coalition
70. Friends of the Earth Japan
71. Future Light Center
72. Future Thanlwin
73. General Strike Committee of Nationalities – GSCN
74. Generation Wave
75. Global Myanmar Spring Revolution (GMSR)
76. Grass-root People
77. Help Myanmar (USA)
78. Human Rights Educators Network
79. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
80. Human Rights Now
81. Info Birmanie
82. Institute for Asian Democracy
83. International Association, Myanmar-Switzerland (IAMS)
84. International Campaign for the Rohingya
85. Japan Campaign to Ban Landmines
86. Japan Tropical Forest Action Network (JTAN)
87. Justice For Myanmar

88. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
89. Kayaw Women Association
90. Karen Human Rights Group
91. Karen Swedish Community (KSC)
92. Karen Women's Organization
93. Karenni National Women's Organization
94. Karenni Society New Zealand
95. Keng Tung Youth
96. Kyaukse University Students' Union
97. LGBTIQ Strike of Mandalay
98. Maha Aung Myay Township People Collective Strike Column
99. Mandalay University Student Strike Column
100. Mandalay Alliance Strike Collective Column
101. Mandalay Based People Strike Column
102. Mandalay Civil Society Organizations
103. Mandalay Engineer Group
104. Mandalay Engineer United Force
105. Mandalay University Student Alumni Union
106. Mandalay Wholesale Strike Column
107. Mandalay Youth Strike Column
108. Matu Chin Community South Australia
109. Medical Family – Mandalay
110. Mekong Watch
111. Metta Campaign Mandalay
112. MIIT Student Strike Column
113. Min Hla farmers Group
114. Minbu farmers Group
115. Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc. (MPI)
116. Mizo Community South Australia
117. Mon State Development Center
118. MRYA-Revolution Core Group
119. Muslim Youth Union
120. Mya Taung Strike Column
121. Myanmar Accountability Project
122. Myanmar Action Group Denmark
123. Myanmar anti-military coup movement in New Zealand
124. Myanmar Campaign Network
125. Myanmar Community Group Christchurch New Zealand
126. Myanmar Community Group Dunedin New Zealand
127. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
128. Myanmar Diaspora Group Finland
129. Myanmar Engineers - New Zealand

130. Myanmar Gonye (New Zealand)
131. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
132. Myanmar Railway, Region (3) CDM Strike Column
133. Myanmar Students' Union in New Zealand
134. Myanmar's Community Coffs Harbour
135. Myaung Education Network
136. Myaung Medical Team မွေ့ဦးရောင်နီဆေးအဖွဲ့
137. Nelson Myanmar Community Group New Zealand
138. Netherlands-Myanmar Solidarity Platform
139. Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma)
140. Never Again Coalition
141. New Zealand Doctors for NUG
142. New Zealand Karen Association
143. New Zealand Zo Community Inc.
144. No 7 State High School Alumni Strike Column
145. No Business With Genocide
146. New Rehmonnya Federated Force (NRFF)
147. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
148. Overseas Mon Association. New Zealand
149. Padauk
150. Pan Pa Wash People Strike Column
151. Peace and Culture Foundation
152. Phayagye Peace Strike Column
153. Private Pre-school Teachers Association
154. Progressive Voice
155. Pwintphyu Development Organisation
156. Pyi Gyi Ta Gon Strike
157. Pyithu Gonye (New Zealand)
158. Rohingya Community in Japan (RCJ)
159. Rvwang Community Association New Zealand
160. Sangha Samaga Strike Column
161. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas
162. Save Myanmar Fundraising Group (New Zealand)
163. Sein Pan Strike Column
164. Shan Community (New Zealand)
165. Shan MATA
166. SINAPIS Archdiocese of Osaka
167. Sisters 2 Sisters
168. Southern Dragon Myanmar
169. Southern Youth Development Organization
170. Strike Column of Representatives of Arbitrarily Arrested People

171. Strike Column of Teachers from Universities and Degree Colleges of Mandalay
172. Suomi-Myanmar
173. Support Group for Democracy in Myanmar (the Netherlands)
174. Swedish Burma Committee
175. Ta'ang Women's Organization
176. Ta'ang Legal Aid
177. Taekwando Sport Association
178. Tanintharyi MATA
179. Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)
180. Thapaynyo News Letter
181. The Ladies
182. The Swedish Foundation for Human Rights
183. U.S. Campaign for Burma
184. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
185. Victoria Myanmar Youth (VMY)
186. Western Australia Myanmar Community
187. Western Australia Myanmar Democratic Network
188. Women Activists Myanmar (WAM)
189. Women Advocacy Coalition - Myanmar
190. Women's League of Burma
191. Women's Active Museum on War and Peace (WAM)
192. Women's Democratic Club, Femin
193. Youths for Community-Myaung
194. ဒို့မြေကွန်ရက် - LIOH
195. ပွင့်ဖြူလယ်ယာမြေကွန်ရက်
196. မျိုးဆက် - Generations