



HRN strongly opposes Myanmar's Sham Elections, and States Must Reject Them

Human Rights Now protests the Myanmar military's plan to conduct transparently corrupted general elections beginning from 28 December 2025 in a sham attempt to "legitimize" its illegal rule. Aside from the underlying illegitimacy of the military to organize elections at all, the election process has fatal flaws including the military's lack of control over much of Myanmar's territory, ongoing attacks on civilians, flagrant manipulation of the process, arbitrary dissolution of opposition parties, and crackdowns on opposition members, media, and civil society.

We call on the military to cease any attempt to conduct such elections and all related human rights violations, and to restore Myanmar's 2020 democratically elected government. We also call on the international community to unequivocally reject the planned elections and to implement all appropriate measures to help end the military's illegal rule including targeted sanctions and embargos on weapons and jet fuel.

1. Reasons why Myanmar's upcoming elections will not be fair, free, or legitimate

a. The illegitimacy of Myanmar's military to organize elections.

Myanmar's military already arbitrarily overturned the results of the 2020 election, in which Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party won 82% of seats, with its 2021 coup and arrest of at least 197 ministers and MPs and 154 Union Election Commission officials. It has extended its illegal "state of emergency" rule eight times, and throughout the military has continued to commit grave mass atrocities against its own people including rampant military strikes on civilians and mass arbitrary arrests of civil society as noted below. It has no legitimacy to organize elections.

b. The military's lack of control of territory and ongoing conflict.

By January 2025, the military only controlled 21% of Myanmar, with opposition forces controlling 42% and the rest contested. Its 2024 census only covered 145 of Myanmar's 330 townships, and out of those, the military-controlled Union Election Commission asked parties in mid-2025 to prepare candidates for only about 100 townships. In September 2025 the military stated that voting would not occur in 56 "not conducive" townships and only cover 202 townships, and in October 2025 it still did not have control over at least 80 townships. Meanwhile, 3.5 million people in Myanmar have been displaced and 20 million require humanitarian assistance. These factors make any free



and fair election representing the will of all Myanmar's citizens impossible to expect. The military's efforts to retake territory ahead of the elections has involved significantly more airstrikes on civilians and civilian infrastructure in January-May 2025 (1,134 strikes) than the same period in 2024 (640 strikes) and 2023 (197 strikes), amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, further underscoring its illegitimacy.

c. The military's illegitimate manipulations and corruption of the election process.

The military has taken flagrant steps to manipulate, rig, and corrupt the electoral process. Following the coup and again in July 2025, the military replaced the Union Election Commission, which oversees elections, with a military-appointed body, with the current military leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, appointing himself as acting president. In January 2023, it passed a new electoral law that arbitrarily restricts party registrations and prohibits convicted persons from participating (aiming at arbitrarily arrested opposition party members), under which it has arbitrarily dissolved at least 40 opposition parties, including the NLD.

In July 2025 it passed a draconian law that criminalizes criticism of the elections, banning all speech, organizing, or protests "disrupting" the electoral process according to its arbitrary standards. Nearly 100 persons have already been detained under the law for traditional political actions and speech including social media posts, distributing leaflets, and giving speeches, often without even using the word "election." Legitimate criticism of the election process has been greatly chilled in clear violation of freedom of expression. The military has also continued to crackdown on civil society since its coup, including arbitrarily arresting over 30,000 political prisoners for supporting the opposition or criticizing the military, including at least 115 journalists, effectively destroying independent media in Myanmar.

2. The international rejection of the upcoming elections

The international community has widely criticized the Myanmar military's plans for sham elections. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated "I don't think anybody believes that those elections will be free and fair", calling for "a credible path back to civilian rule." UN high commissioner for human rights Volker Türk called holding the elections "unfathomable." UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews described the planned elections as a "fraud" and called on the international community to reject their legitimacy. Japan's then foreign minister Takeshi Iwaya stated "that if general elections are held without seeing any



moves toward political progress ... it could only provoke further strong backlash ... and make a peaceful resolution more difficult.” Several countries have implemented sanctions on Myanmar following its coup including the EU, Australia, UK, US, and Canada.

3. Conclusion and Call to Action

Under the current conditions in Myanmar as documented above, it is impossible to expect genuine elections can be held consistent with international standards. As the International Federation of Journalists has stated, “It is a charade held under the barrel of a gun.”

We call on Myanmar’s military to:

- Cease any attempt to conduct such elections and all related human rights violations,
- Restore the 2020 democratically elected government of Myanmar; end all conflict; release all arbitrarily detained persons; and repeal abusive election laws.
- We call on the international community to:
- Reject Myanmar’s planned elections with clear official statements
- Implement all appropriate measures against the Myanmar military’s illegal rule including targeted sanctions and embargos on weapons and jet fuel.