

21 September, 2020

**To: Member and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council**

**Subject: Open letter from Myanmar civil society organizations to the UN Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar during the COVID-19 crisis**

Your Excellencies,

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, which falls on 21 September, we, 364 Myanmar civil society organizations express concern over the deteriorating human rights situation amid the pandemic, escalating armed conflict in ethnic areas, and the lack of humanitarian assistance, and would like the UN Human Rights Council to urge Myanmar to respect and protect the rights of all people in the country and to adhere to the demand for a global ceasefire by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Myanmar is one of the many countries in the world bitterly facing the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world seeks to respond to the catastrophe, Myanmar has increased its military offensives in Rakhine and Chin states, taking advantage of COVID-19. As the armed conflict intensifies, we are especially concerned that innocent civilians are facing atrocities and the scourge of war, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and extrajudicial killings.

On September 3 at around 9:30 pm the Myanmar military set fire to Hpa Yar Paung and Taung Pauk Villages in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State according to a news report by the Rakhine-based Development Media Group. According to All Arakan Students' & Youths' Congress (AASYC), nearly 190 houses have been set on fire in those two villages, and two villagers were killed on the same day. Furthermore, on September 8, we have learned sadly that a total of four villagers, including two innocent children, were killed and 11 others were injured when artillery shells fired by the Myanmar military hit Nyaungkan Village in Myebon Township. Again on September 17, in Shwe Long Tin Village, Rathedaung Township, a 43-year old man was killed and another two civilians got injured by the Myanmar military's artillery shell.

From 1 January 2019 to 10 September 2020, according to Burma Monitor, a local research and monitoring organization, 432 civilians were killed and 775 injured nationwide due to armed conflict and human rights violations committed during armed conflict. In Rakhine and Chin States alone, 295 civilians were killed and 674 were injured during the same duration.

To make matters worse, while people are facing hardship in the COVID-19 crisis, the civilians are not only suffering from the armed conflict, but also from information blackouts by the Myanmar government. It has been more than a year since the Myanmar government cut off internet access to northern Rakhine State and Paletwa Township in Chin State for security reasons, leaving people with serious challenges without access to information about COVID-19 and the war. Such actions by the Myanmar government not only violate the basic rights of the people, but also pave the way for the Myanmar military to perpetuate serious human rights abuses which could amount to war

crimes and crimes against humanity, while keeping the people of Myanmar and the international community in the dark.

In addition, the Myanmar government are using the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for the arbitrary arrest and detention of activists who are calling for an end to war and human rights abuses and an end to internet restriction. We are particularly concerned that these efforts are intended to shrink the democratic and civil society space through oppression and unjust measures.

On September 9, three students from Arakan Student's Union who protested in front of the Rakhine State government office to stop the war, were charged and arrested under the Natural Disaster Management Law and Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Then, on September 10, thirteen students of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), who staged a similar anti-war rally in Mandalay, were charged under Article 19 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Additionally, the authorities raided the house of Wai Yan Phyo Moe and Ko Paing Min Khant, members of the ABFSU, on September 12 in connection with an anti-war sticker campaign in Rangoon and they were also charged under Article 19 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Such arrests on young peace-loving people who are calling for peace and to stop the war, make us understand that the Myanmar government is showing that they don't want genuine peace.

While the Myanmar government and military are using the COVID-19 pandemic as a weapon of war and as tool for political exploitation, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, nearly 20,000 people have been charged by the government for breaking the Natural Disaster Management Law and for not following the rules during emergency crisis, according to Radio Free Asia's Myanmar program. As the current Myanmar government, who claims to be establishing democracy ignores the plight of the people, focused on the November 8 general elections, and continues to repress people's freedom of expression, our civil society groups are particularly concerned that the people will face even greater human rights abuses in the future.

While the world is facing the bitter crisis of COVID-19, by continuing attacks that target civilians, the Myanmar government is not only committing blatant war crimes and crimes against humanity, but also violating the Geneva Convention, which Myanmar is a signatory. Therefore, we, as civil society organizations from Myanmar urge the Human Rights Council to take the following steps to ensure justice by bringing the Myanmar military that commits war crimes and crimes against humanity to account.

- The Myanmar military must immediately end all hostility and offensive attacks in ethnic areas amid COVID-19 and the Myanmar government and military must adhere to the call for a global ceasefire made by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres;
- Authorities must stop the unjust suppression against democracy activists, peaceful demonstrators, and human rights defenders by releasing those who are in detention and dropping charges against them;
- The Myanmar government must respect the international obligations and responsibilities to which they have committed; and

- The UN Human Rights Council should take necessary action to bring justice and accountability for the victims of human rights abuses committed by the Myanmar military, which amount to international crimes, and urge the UN Security Council to refer the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

For more information, please contact:

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**Signed by 364 civil society organizations:**

1. 8888 သွေးသစ် (စိုးညှင်)
2. 88 Pwint Lin (Kachin)
3. Action Committee for Democracy Development (ACDD)
4. Active Women Development Initiative (AWDI)
5. Ah Lin Yaung Pan Taing Developing Group
6. Ahlin Tagar Rural Development Organization
7. Alin Thit Sar Development Group
8. Alinn Bhamaw Development Organization
9. Alinsaetamarn Library and Resource Center
10. All Arakan Civil Society Organization Partner (AAC SOP)
11. All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC)
12. All Kachin Youth Union – AKYU
13. All Burma Federation of Youth Union
14. Amnesty Arakan Team
15. Anin Region Environmental Conservation Group
16. Ann Township Pipeline Monitoring Group
17. Another Alternative
18. Ar Ra Kha Foundation
19. Arakan CSO Network (ACN)
20. Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team
21. Arakan Peasant Union
22. Arakan Students' Union (Arakan)
23. Arakan Students' Union – Universities of Rangoon
24. Arr Marn Thit Social Development Organization
25. Arr Thit Yaung Chi
26. Airavati
27. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP)
28. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
29. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organization (Minhla)
30. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organization (Ngaphae)
31. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organization (Magway Region)

32. Ayeyarwaddy CSOs Network
33. Ayeyarwaddy Youth Network
34. AYY Farmers Union
35. Ayyar Pyo May Women Development Organization
36. Ba Ann Media Group
37. Basic Lawyer Network
38. Bawa Ahlinn
39. Bee House
40. Beautiful Beach Development Network
41. Bu Thee Taung Youth Network
42. Burma Monitor (Research and Monitoring)
43. Center for Social Integrity
44. Chin Human Rights Organization
45. Chin Land Affairs Network
46. Chin State MATA Working Group
47. Chin Women Development Organization
48. Chin Youth Organization (Kanpalet)
49. Chin Youth Organization (Matupi)
50. Chin Resource Center
51. Chin Youth Organization (Mindat)
52. Citizen Action for Transparency (CAfT)
53. Civil Call
54. Community Association Development
55. Community Empowerment and Resilience Association (CERA)
56. Community Observer Association
57. Community Peace Support Group
58. Compassionate Hands Youth Humanitarian Promoters
59. Christian Social Service and Development Department (Pathein)
60. COMREG Community Response Group
61. Chinland Natural Resource Watch Group
62. Dama Ahlin Social Development Organization
63. Dawei Development Committee
64. Dawei Regions Farmer Union
65. Democratic Education Corner-DEC
66. Development Forces
67. Democratic Youth (Bago)
68. Democracy, Peace and Women Organization
69. Diversity and Public Truth
70. Doe Myae Civil Social Development Organization
71. Dawn Peace Foundation
72. Education (SPACE)
73. Edin Mon Youth Group
74. Educational Initiatives (EI)
75. Environmental Justice Group

76. Equality Myanmar (EQMM)
77. Ethnic Equality
78. Ever Green CBO
79. Famer Agricultural Network
80. Farmers and Land Rights Action Group
81. Federation of National Farmer/ Peasant Union
82. Former Political Prisoner Society (East Bago)
83. Free & Fair (youth) Network
84. Free and Justice
85. Free Education Service Organization
86. Freedom Society
87. Future Arr Man Thit Development Group
88. Future Light Center
89. Future Light (Sagaing)
90. Future Light Committee
91. Future Light Social Development Organization
92. Future Star Youth Organization
93. Future Women Association (FWA)
94. Future Young Pioneer Organization
95. Gayunarshin Social Development Organization
96. Generation Wave (GW)
97. Genuine People's Servants (GPS)
98. Golden Future Social Development Organization
99. Golden Heart Organization
100. Good Hope Foundation
101. Grip Hands
102. Harmony Youth Association
103. Helping Hand Organization
104. Hinthar Tagon
105. Hkumzup Development Committee
106. Hna Lone Hla (AL)
107. Hope for Children Development Organization
108. Hsar Ka Paw Group
109. Hsar Mu Htaw Group
110. Hsar Mu Waw Group
111. Htaw Me Par Group
112. Htoi San Local Development Organization
113. Htoi Gender and Development Organization
114. Htoi Gin Tawng
115. Htum Thit Sa Rural Development Organization
116. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
117. IFI Watch Myanmar
118. Justice Movement for Community - Innlay
119. Justice Action Group

120. Ka Nyunt Kwin Youth Center
121. Kachin Peace Network
122. Kachin Women Peace Network (KWPN)
123. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
124. Kachin Women's Union
125. Kanpetlet Land Development Organization
126. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
127. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
128. Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)
129. Karen Student Network Group (KSNG)
130. Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
131. Karen Women Union (KWU)
132. Karen Youth Organization (KYO)
133. Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN)
134. Karenni Ever Green
135. Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG)
136. Karenni MATA
137. Karenni National Women Organization (KNWO)
138. Karenni National Youth Organization
139. Karenni State Farmer Union
140. Kaung Myat Hnalonethar Health Care Organization
141. Kawyaw National Youth Organization (KyNYO)
142. Kayan Earth Right Action Network
143. Kayan New Generation Youth
144. Kayan Women Organization
145. Kayin Culture and Literature Committee (Thaton)
146. Keng Tung Youth
147. Khaing Myae Thitsar Development Committee
148. Kindness Foundation (Karen)
149. Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (Pathein)
150. Karen Open Group (KOG)
151. Kyaik Hti Yo Mountain Range Lover Association
152. Kyaingtone Youth
153. Kyaukpyu Rural Development Association
154. Kyike Mayaw MATA
155. Kyonemaku Chaung Network
156. LAIN Technical Support Group
157. Lan Pya Kyal Sin Group
158. LatButta Farmer Union
159. Lawngbit Hkawng
160. Legal Aid for Human Rights (Shan State)
161. LIAN Technical Support Group
162. Life Light
163. Light House Ayeyarwaddy Network

164. Light Social Development Organization
165. Lin Lett Kyal Social Development Organization
166. Lisu Civil Society Network
167. Living Water Organization
168. Local Development Network (LDN)
169. Loi Yang Bum Community Development
170. Loka Ahlinn (Social Development Organization)
171. Lu Mu Htar Group
172. Ma Day Island Youth Development Association
173. Ma Haw tha Htar Group
174. Mass Movement Acceleration Network
175. MATA Mandalay
176. MATA Sagaing Region
177. Matupi Women Association
178. Mawduklarmae Social Development Association (MSDA)
179. May Doe Arrman Women Development Organization
180. Metta Development Foundation
181. Mhine Nyein Network (Bago)
182. Mi Karen Youth
183. Minggalar Foundation
184. Mitta Yaung Sin Youth Group
185. Mone Chaung Lover
186. Mon Area Community Development Organization (MACDO)
187. Mon Green Develop Group
188. Mon Region Social Development Network
189. Mon Social Development and Peace Network
190. Mon State CSO Network
191. Mon Youth Organization (zobbu)
192. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
193. Mong Pan Youth Association
194. MRDJO Magway Regional Rules of law and Justice group
195. Mu Se Multi Development Association (မူစဲကမ်းဘက်စုံဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအသင်း)
196. Mudon CSO Network
197. Mudon Township Development Group
198. Myaebon Youth Association
199. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
200. Myanmar Digital Rescue (MDR)
201. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
202. Myit Ma Ayeyarwaddy Development Organization
203. Mwetaung Area Development Group
204. Nam Shani Organization
205. Namkyeo Parahita Foundation
206. Nann Kyar Youth Association
207. NeT Organization

208. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
209. Olive Organization
210. Open Development Foundation
211. Oway Education and Youth Institute
212. Pa-O Women's Union
213. Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO)
214. Pan Tain Shin Women Rural Development Organization
215. Pan Thi Kyo LGBT Organization
216. Parshan River Maintenance Committee
217. Pauk Khaung Youth Network
218. Paung Ku
219. Paung Sie Ayar
220. Paungsee Myittar Organization
221. Peace & Development Center Meiktila
222. Peace and Development Initiative - Kintha
223. Peace and Rule of Law Acceleration Network (PRLAN)
224. Peace Bike Tour
225. Peace for Youth
226. Peace Working Committee (PWC)
227. Peace, Development & Civic Engagement (P.D.CE)
228. Peasant Legal Aid Network (PLAN)
229. People for People (PFP)
230. People Oriented and Development Group
231. Phyu Sin Mitta
232. Phyu Sin Myittar Social Development Organization
233. Pone Yate Sit Regional Development Organization
234. Progressive Voice
235. Pwint Phyu Development Organization
236. Pyar Taung Conservation Group
237. Pyay Division Mhine Peace Network
238. Pyi Thue A Kyoe Pyue Group
239. Pyoe Organization
240. Ra Kha Yin Thwe
241. Rakha Arr Marn Group
242. Rakha Strength Social Development Organization
243. Rakhaing Women's Union
244. Rakhine Ethnic Congress
245. Rakhine National Network (Lay Taung)
246. Rakhine Social Network (Myaebon)
247. Rakhine State Civil Society Organizations Peace Committee
248. Rakhine State Disabilities Organization
249. Rakhine Women Network
250. Rakhine Youth Generation
251. Rakhine Youth New Generation Network

252. Ran Byae Township Development Group
253. Reliable Organization
254. Retired Voluntary Group
255. Rivers and Creeks Monitoring Group
256. Rule of Law Watch Group
257. Regional Development Organization
258. Rural Social Development Organization
259. Sabae and Kyay Sin Mining Watch Group
260. Sanpya Social Development Group
261. Sarnar Kyi Phyu Social Development Organization
262. SarPhyu Farmer Network
263. Saytana Shaesaung Youth Organization
264. Sein Lan Lwin Pyin Group (Laputta)
265. Sein Lan Pyin Oo Lwin
266. Sein Lann Mon Myay
267. Shan Literature
268. Shan MATA Working Group
269. Shan State Peace Taskforce
270. Shan Women Development Network
271. She Sawng Kyea Women Group (Karmai)
272. Shining Star Interfaith and human rights Group
273. Shwe Min Thar Foundation
274. Shwe Nathar Farmer Development Organization
275. Shwe Pain Nyin Group
276. Shwe Pan Pyo Lat (Education, Women and Child Support)
277. Shwe Thinkha Social Development Organization
278. Shwechinthae Farmers Network
279. Shwechinthae Social Service Group (Shwebo)
280. Sit Man Thaw Sanda Social group
281. SKY-Youth, Kyaukphyu
282. Social Development and Peace Network
283. Social Program Aid for Civic
284. Star Way Organization
285. Student and Youth Congress of Burma - SYCB
286. Swam Su Ti Rural Development Organization
287. Synergy Social Harmony Organization
288. Ta'ang Women's Organization
289. Tampadipa
290. Tanintharyi MATA
291. TaungGoke Public Service Committee
292. Tedim Youth Fellowship
293. Than Dwe Development Association
294. Than Lwin Thar Chin group
295. Thanlwin Network

296. Thazin - Legal Aid Group
297. The Seagull:Human Rights, Peace & Development
298. Thin Gan Taung Waterfall Group
299. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar (Peace Seekers and Multiculturalist Movement)
300. Third Eye Organization (Mindat)
301. Thwee CSO
302. Together Thanlyin
303. Tonzang Youth Fellowship
304. Township Leading Group (Waingmaw)
305. Transparency and Accountability Network Kachin State
306. Tree Lover group
307. Uakthon Local Social Development Organization
308. Union of Karenni State Youth
309. Universities of Kachin Literature And Culture Federation
310. Upper Myanmar Watch Group
311. Waingmaw CSO Network
312. Waingmaw Lisu Development Association
313. Wan Lark Development Foundation
314. White Hand Social Welfare Group
315. Windayea Village Social group
316. Women Development Group (Bago)
317. Women Empowerment Group
318. Women for Women Foundation (WWF)
319. Women's Peace Network
320. Worker Development Organization
321. World View Monitoring and helping Group
322. Yae Aye Alliance Development Group
323. Yai Ywal Yar Youth Development Organization
324. Yangon MATA
325. Yangon Youth Network
326. Yatanar Youngyi Social Development Organization
327. Yaung Chi Thit Public Library group
328. YoeMa Civil Society Group
329. Young Ni Oo Social Development Organization
330. YOUNITY
331. Youth Arr Man Group
332. Youth For A New Society (YNS)
333. Youth Initiative for Human Rights
334. Youth Society Network
335. Zo Youth Organization
336. Zomi Students and Youth Organization
337. Zomin Youth Association
338. ကချင်စာပေနှင့်ယဉ်ကျေးမှုအဖွဲ့ (တက္ကသိုလ်များ) အသင်းချုပ်

- 339. ငြိမ်းသံလွင်ဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း
- 340. စည်းလုံးဧရာလူမှုအဖွဲ့အစည်းစကားဝိုင်း
- 341. ဆွေသဟာ လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
- 342. ဒို့တာဝန်နိုင်ငံအရေးကွန်ရက်
- 343. မြစ်ဖျားဧရာ
- 344. မိတ္ထီလာခရိုင် အလင်းတန်းအဖွဲ့
- 345. မေမြို့ တောင်သူလယ်သမား ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးကွန်ရက်
- 346. ရွှေတောင်တိုက်နယ်တောင်သူအားမာန် ဝမ်းတွင်းမြို့နယ်
- 347. ရှမ်းပြည်ကချင်အမျိုးသားလုံးဆိုင်ရာကွန်ရက်
- 348. လေဖြတ်သူများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း မြန်မာ(SAM)
- 349. လောကပါလတရားမြှင့်တင်ရေးကွန်ရက်
- 350. သန္တိသုခအခမဲ့လူမှုကူညီရေးအသင်း
- 351. လွတ်လပ်သောအရှိချင်းများအင်အားစု
- 352. ပြည်သာယာဌာနေအမျိုးသမီးများဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအဖွဲ့ (PTY-Group)
- 353. ရွှေခြံမြေကွန်ရက်၊ ကွမ်းခြံကုန်းမြို့နယ်၊
- 354. ရပ်ရွာငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး နှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးရှေ့ဆောင်အဖွဲ့၊ ကလေးမြို့နယ်၊ စစ်ကိုင်းတိုင်းဒေသကြီး။
- 355. ဒို့လယ်ယာ ကွန်ရက်၊ ဟင်္သာတမြို့နယ်၊ ဧရာဝတီ
- 356. လူ့အခွင့်အရေးကာကွယ်မြှင့်တင်ရေးကွန်ရက်၊ ချောက်မြို့နယ်၊ မကွေးတိုင်းဒေသကြီး။
- 357. အလုပ်သမားအဖွဲ့ဖွဲ့စည်းပေါ်ပေါက်ရေးနှင့်အမျိုးသမီး အခွင့်အရေး အသိပညာပေးရေး (ပဲခူးကွန်ရက်) ပဲခူးတိုင်းဒေသကြီး။
- 358. တောင်သူလယ်သမားများနှင့် ရေလုပ်သားများ အကျိုးစီးပွားကာကွယ်စောင့်ရှောက်ရေးကွန်ရက်၊ မြစ်ကျိုးတိုက်နယ်၊ ပဲခူးတိုင်းဒေသကြီး။
- 359. ဥသျှစ်ပင် လူငယ်ကွန်ရက်၊ ဥသျှစ်ပင်မြို့၊ ပန်းတောင်းမြို့နယ်၊ ပဲခူးတိုင်းဒေသကြီး။
- 360. Peasants' Legal Aid Network - Arakan , မြောက်ဦးမြို့နယ်၊ ရခိုင်ပြည်နယ်။
- 361. မွန်လူငယ်ကွန်ရက် -ရေး၊ ရေးလမိုင်း၊ မွန်ပြည်နယ်။
- 362. လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးနှင့် ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးကွန်ရက်၊ ပေါင်မြို့နယ်၊ မွန်ပြည်နယ်။
- 363. Ramkhye - ရမ်းခေး၊ မြစ်ကြီးနားကွန်ရက်၊ ကချင်ပြည်နယ်။
- 364. Justice Drum ကွန်ရက်၊ တောင်ကြီးမြို့နယ်၊ ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်တောင်ပိုင်း။