

## **Statement by UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews on the Release of Detainees**

WASHINGTON, DC (18 Oct 2021) — While today's announcement by the Myanmar junta of the release of over 5,000 political prisoners is welcome, it is important to remember that junta forces detained these individuals illegally for exercising their fundamental human rights. Many of those detained to date were tortured, some to death, others were victims of sexual assault; some were infected with Covid-19 and perished while in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. All suffered; all had their human rights violated. It is outrageous that any were arbitrarily detained in the first place.

Their release is clearly not because the junta has had a change of heart. Indeed, the arbitrary arrest and persecution of those exercising their fundamental human rights continues. The release of those detained is due instead to pressure that is being exerted on the junta from inside and from outside of Myanmar.

The junta seeks three things from the international community: 1) money, 2) weapons, and 3) legitimacy. ASEAN's announcement that the junta will not be welcome at its upcoming summit denies the junta the third—legitimacy. So does the failure of the junta to secure the seat for its chosen representative to the United Nations General Assembly.

Sustained pressure on all three fronts—money, weapons and legitimacy—is the best way the international community can support the people of Myanmar to protect their human rights and save their country. The junta's actions today demonstrate that, despite their statements to the contrary, they are not impervious to pressure.