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Freedom and Labor Action Group

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Press Release: Publication of Report, "The Life of Workers under the Coup and the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar."

Today, May 1st, 2022, Freedom and Labor Action Group (FLAG) published the report, titled "The Life of Workers under the Coup and the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar".

This report reflects the situation of workers in the nine months between the attempted coup on February 1st and October 2021, including the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar.

Since February 1st, Myanmar has been suffering from the consequences of the military coup. The military council has arrested many union and labor leaders and has taken various forms of action to suppress labor unions, making it nearly impossible to organize safely. Therefore, social security of the workers, job security, union development, and labor rights have been significantly impacted.

Additionally, the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted workers' food security and livelihoods. This report explores the labor situation in Myanmar in relation to the negative consequences of the military coup and the COVID-19 pandemic for the awareness and attention of the international community, as well as the Burmese public.

Since 2010, when hopes for a transition to democracy in Myanmar began, job opportunities for Myanmar workers and opportunities for international investors skyrocketed, leading to the emergence of an active and viable labor market. Demands for better working hours, wages and general labor rights by workers and labor activists have also grown. The workforce has participated in successive revolutionary movements, including being at the forefront of the 2021 Spring Revolution.

During 2020 and 2021, the impact of the general instability caused by the consequences of COVID-19, and the adverse actions of the military coup has led to closures of many factories, resulting in several thousand people becoming jobless. While workers are in a situation akin to modern slavery due to scant job opportunities and being vulnerable to their rights being abused, labor unions, which were formed to protect these rights, have been targeted.

Therefore, FLAG has produced and published this report in order to present the real situation on the ground, the root causes of these problems, and to make a first step towards improving workers' lives.

This report also compiles recommendations for concerned parties regarding the workers' situation. It is hoped that this report can be used to advocate for further action. FLAG would like to show our appreciation and thanks to everyone involved in the publication of this report.

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