

Five years since genocide, the world must act to ensure justice for Rohingya

In marking the five-year commemoration of the genocide committed against the Rohingya in 2017, 384 civil society organizations reaffirm our commitment to continue to stand in solidarity with and seek justice for the Rohingya, to ensure the full restoration of their rights in Myanmar, and to end the impunity of the Myanmar military. The plight of the Rohingya must not be forgotten.

On this day five years ago, the Myanmar military launched a terror campaign in Rakhine State against the Rohingya and massacred, tortured, raped, and burned villages. They forced three quarters of a million people to flee to Bangladesh where they remain today alongside a quarter of a million Rohingya who fled earlier persecutions in Myanmar. Around one million Rohingya are struggling to survive in crowded refugee camps in Bangladesh, waiting to return to their home and their country in dignity with their full rights restored.

The return of Rohingya to Myanmar is substantially predicated on ending the impunity of the Myanmar military and accountability for the grave atrocity crimes the military has committed, including by prosecuting individuals who are most responsible. Yet, progress towards justice and accountability has remained minimal, made even more elusive by the military's attempted coup on February 1, 2021.

As the military commits war crimes and crimes against humanity throughout the country, perpetrating similar crimes committed against the Rohingya in 2017 during its 'clearance operations', on 10 August 2022, the junta's spokesperson for Rakhine State, U Hla Thein, [told Radio Free Asia](#) the junta is making plans to repatriate Rohingya refugees to Rakhine State – at the rate of 150 people per day starting in September 2022. This is a part of its ongoing desperate attempt to gain legitimacy from the international community. As recently [expressed](#) by the High Commissioner for Human Rights during her visit to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, "conditions are not right for returns" and "Repatriation must always be conducted in a voluntary and dignified manner, only when safe and sustainable conditions exist in Myanmar."

Rohingya in Myanmar continue to live under genocidal policies in apartheid-like conditions, systematically denied citizenship, with severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms including freedom of movement, access to health, education and other essential services. They are arbitrarily arrested, detained and treated as criminals for traveling outside of confined areas and further dehumanized for attempting to flee appalling conditions within Rakhine State. The over 130,000 Rohingya that remain in open air prison camps in Rakhine State face new restrictions on movement and aid blockages since the attempted coup. In [effect](#), the genocidal acts of deliberately inflicting conditions of life that are calculated to bring about the Rohingya's physical destruction, in whole or in part, are continuing to be perpetrated by the military junta, leading to their "slow death".

Emboldened by the lack of international, concerted action to hold the military accountable, the world is bearing witness to the military's atrocity crimes, amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, that are now being perpetrated against the wider population in Myanmar as people bravely resist the junta's ongoing violent attempt to seize power which has failed after 18 months. These crimes are all too familiar to the ethnic communities who have endured decades of atrocities by the Myanmar military.

Five years on, words have not turned into robust action as more statements of "grave concern" pile on to the condemnation of military's atrocity crimes. Actions must speak louder.

We welcome the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the preliminary objections lodged by the military junta in the case of Rohingya genocide brought forward by The Gambia, which has paved the way for the court to adjudicate the merits of The Gambia's case. With this ruling, governments must send a strong message to the Myanmar military that they will be held accountable for their crimes by supporting The Gambia's case – including lending legal, financial and technical support. In addition, the UN Security Council, and the UK as the “penholder” on Myanmar, must convene a meeting on the progress of the implementation of the provisional measures.

Efforts to hold the Myanmar military criminally accountable must be expedited. This includes supporting universal jurisdiction cases to prosecute the military, in particular the universal jurisdiction case in Argentina. It is vital that the international community continue to explore other avenues for full justice and accountability, including a UN Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court or to set up an ad-hoc tribunal.

We welcome the US government's determination earlier this year that crimes committed against Rohingya amount to genocide. Five months have passed since this decisive step. The US must bolster accountability efforts by joining The Gambia case at the ICJ and impose further sanctions including sanctioning the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) – one of the junta's main sources of foreign currency revenue.

The Myanmar military continues to enrich themselves through their businesses and are enabled by the web of arms brokers that supply them with weapons and equipment to carry out their atrocity crimes. There must be further efforts to impose targeted sanctions against their businesses, partners and cronies. Governments must impose arms embargo against the military, including on jet fuel to the military, while working towards a coordinated global arms embargo.

The ongoing crimes against the Rohingya underscore the importance of the National Unity Government (NUG), as the legitimate government of Myanmar, to translate the policy of the NUG into a concrete set of actions and implement the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ. These can include by fully and meaningfully engaging with the Rohingya to restore their equal rights, recognizing the Rohingya as an ethnic and indigenous group to Myanmar, and ensuring their representation in the ongoing political processes, including in the highest echelons of the NUG governing structures. The NUG, the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) must immediately amend the discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law by removing all discriminatory articles and clauses as pledged in its [policy paper](#), and repeal the racist and xenophobic four “Race and Religion Protection Laws” and the National Verification Process that has long been used as a tool for genocide. The people of Spring Revolution have shown their solidarity and empathy with the Rohingya community since its start. It is time that the NUG translate its policy and people's solidarity into actions.

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Signed by 384 organizations, including 265 groups who have chosen not to disclose their names:

1. 8888 Generation (New Zealand)
2. Action Committee for Democracy Development
3. Ah Nah Podcast - Conversation with Myanmar
4. All Burma Democratic Face in New Zealand
5. ALTSEAN-Burma
6. Ananda Data
7. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
8. Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC)
9. Asian Dignity Initiative
10. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
11. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
12. Association Suisse-Birmanie (ASB)
13. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
14. Auckland Kachin Community NZ
15. Auckland Zomi Community
16. Ayeyarwaddy Youth Network
17. Bandugavlar Civil Call - BCC (Sagaing Region)
18. Blooming Padauk
19. Burma Action Ireland
20. Burma Campaign UK
21. Burma Civil War Museum (BCM)
22. Burma Human Rights Network
23. Burma Task Force
24. Burman suomalaiset Finland
25. Burmese Community Group (Manawatu, NZ)
26. Burmese Muslim Association (BMA)
27. Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
28. Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organisation New Zealand
29. Campaign for a New Myanmar
30. Chin Community of Auckland
31. Chin Human Rights Organization
32. Chin Leaders of Tomorrow
33. Chin MATA Working Group
34. Chin Resources Center
35. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
36. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
37. CRPH & NUG Supporters Ireland
38. CRPH Funding Ireland
39. CRPH Support Group, Norway
40. Democracy for Ethnic Minorities Organization
41. Democracy for Myanmar - Working Group (NZ)
42. Democracy, Peace And Women's Organization
43. Digital Right Collective
44. Equality Myanmar
45. European Karen Network (EKN)
46. Federal Myanmar Benevolence Group (NZ)
47. Freedom for Burma

48. Future Thanlwin
49. General Strike Committee of Nationalities (GSCN)
50. Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy (GM4MD)
51. Grass-root People
52. Human Rights Educator Network
53. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
54. India For Myanmar
55. Info Birmanie
56. Initiatives for International Dialogue
57. Institute for Asian Democracy
58. International Campaign for the Rohingya
59. Justice for All
60. Justice For Myanmar
61. Karen Human Rights Group
62. Karen Swedish Community
63. Karen Women's Organization
64. Karenni National Women's Organization
65. Karenni Society Finland
66. Karenni Society New Zealand
67. Keng Tung Youth
68. Kyauktada Strike Committee (KSC)
69. MATA (Sagaing Region)
70. Metta Campaign Mandalay
71. Myanmar Accountability Project
72. Myanmar Action Group Denmark (MAGD)
73. Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability - MATA
74. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
75. Myanmar Diaspora Group Finland
76. Myanmar Engineers - New Zealand
77. Myanmar Gonye (New Zealand)
78. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
79. Myanmar Students' Union in New Zealand
80. Never Again Coalition
81. Netherlands - Myanmar Solidarity Platform
82. Network for Advocacy Action
83. New Rehmonnya Federated Force (NRFF)
84. New Zealand Doctors for NUG
85. New Zealand Karen Association
86. New Zealand Zo Community Inc.
87. No Business With Genocide
88. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
89. Overseas Mon Association, New Zealand
90. Pa-O Women's Union
91. Progressive Voice
92. Pyithu Gonye (New Zealand)
93. Rvwang Community Association New Zealand
94. Rohingya Action Ireland
95. SaNaR (Save the Natural Resource)
96. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas

97. Save Myanmar Fundraising Group (New Zealand)
98. Shan Community (New Zealand)
99. Shan MATA
100. Sisters 2 Sisters
101. SOS MYANMAR (ရုန်းကန်သံအဖွဲ့)
102. Southern Dragon (Myanmar)
103. Southern Youth Development Organization
104. Students for Free Burma (SFB)
105. Swedish Burma Committee
106. Synergy-Social Harmony Organization
107. Ta'ang Women's Organization
108. Ta'ang Legal Aid
109. Tanintharyi MATA
110. The Free Burma Campaign (South Africa)
111. The Sentry
112. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar Organization
113. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
114. U.S. Advocacy Coalition for Myanmar (USACM)
115. U.S. Campaign for Burma
116. Women Advocacy Coalition Myanmar
117. Women's League of Burma
118. Women's Peace Network
119. အထက်အညာလွင်ပြင်ရပ်ဝန်း