

Joint Statement on World Refugee Day



20 June 2025

Support Myanmar's displaced communities through border-based aid and legal protection *Stop the Myanmar military junta's atrocities fueling mass displacement*

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, we call on the United Nations (UN), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Myanmar's neighboring countries, and the wider international community to take immediate, concrete actions to address the dire humanitarian needs of Myanmar's displaced communities through border-based channels and ensure legal protection for Myanmar refugees around the world.

Amid sudden and cruel aid cuts in 2025 by the United States (US) government, we call on the international community to restore and increase humanitarian aid and other forms of assistance for Myanmar's displaced communities. This support must be provided directly through Myanmar's trusted local frontline humanitarian responders to enable them to continue delivering much-needed aid to—and strengthening the resilience of—displaced communities through border-based channels. We call on Myanmar's neighboring countries to support such border-based channels, both for aid delivery and for locally led initiatives to build sustainable solutions for Myanmar's displaced communities.

We call on the entire international community, particularly Myanmar's neighbors, to respect and fulfill their international obligation of *non-refoulement*, and end the arbitrary detention, deportations, pushbacks, and all other forced returns of Myanmar people. Under customary international law, every state must ensure the safety and protection of all persons fleeing violence and persecution. We urge the international community to reinstate and expand resettlement opportunities for Myanmar's refugees, and provide them with temporary legal protection, including work permits and student visas; humanitarian aid; and access to essential services, such as healthcare and education.

To end the cycle of displacement, we further call on the international community to take concrete, coordinated actions to hold Min Aung Hlaing and the illegal military junta—the main perpetrators and exacerbators of mass displacement and the worsening polycrisis in Myanmar—accountable under international law. Without further delay, the international community must act to impede the junta's capacity to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. We call on the judges of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to swiftly grant the Prosecutor's request and issue an arrest warrant against Min Aung Hlaing without further delay.

Over 3.5 million people forcibly displaced internally by the Myanmar military

The Myanmar military junta's relentless atrocity crimes continue to fuel mass displacement and worsen the resultant human rights and humanitarian catastrophe, both across the country and beyond its borders. Since its illegal coup attempt in 2021, the junta's brutality [has internally displaced](#) more than 3.2 million people

countrywide—with the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) more than doubling since 2023. Prior to the coup attempt, the Myanmar military had already forced an estimated 328,000 people into protracted displacement—predominantly in Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Shan, Mon, and Karen States. These figures are likely gross underestimations given the significantly higher numbers reported by community-based organizations (CBOs) and local humanitarian responders with direct access to the affected populations.

Since its failed coup, the junta [has launched](#) more than 5,000 airstrikes—many of which have targeted IDP camps, schools, medical facilities, religious sites, and other places where IDPs seek refuge. In 2024, the junta [conducted](#) 104% more airstrikes compared to 2023. Moreover, during the last six months, the junta has rapidly escalated paramotor bombings, artillery shelling, drone attacks, and other forms of aerial attacks targeting IDP communities. These escalating attacks are clear violations of international humanitarian law and have forced IDP communities to flee repeatedly. As the junta teeters on the brink of collapse, these attacks are part of the junta's ongoing collective punishment of the Myanmar people's grassroots revolution to end military tyranny, establish federal democracy, and build sustainable peace.

On 28 March 2025, a massive 7.7-magnitude earthquake devastated central Myanmar, [killing](#) more than 4,400 people and injuring 11,300 more. More than 200,000 people [were](#) internally displaced, forced to survive in makeshift tents and temporary shelters, leaving them extremely vulnerable to aftershocks, extreme heat, and rainstorms. As the Myanmar people have been caring for each other and supporting emergency relief and recovery efforts through people-to-people solidarity, the junta has weaponized, manipulated, and obstructed aid while simultaneously ramping up its lethal attacks on civilians, causing even more displacement and deepening the suffering of affected communities. Since the quake, the junta [has conducted](#) over 982 airstrikes and artillery attacks, killing at least 608 people—including in [Sagaing and Mandalay Regions](#), the epicenter of the quake.

In conjunction with its lethal aerial and ground attacks on civilians, the military junta continues to fuel mass displacement through its forced conscription campaign, which has forced thousands of young people to flee to resistance-controlled areas or across international borders to evade serving the murderous junta and save their own lives. Junta personnel [have disproportionately targeted](#) members of LGBTQIA+ community for forced conscription—forcing them to flee, face financial extortion, or go into hiding to avoid conscription—further marginalizing LGBTQIA+ persons in Myanmar.

Myanmar refugees continue to face unlawful expulsion and deplorable conditions

Protection remains far from guaranteed for the millions of Myanmar people seeking safety from the Myanmar military's violence across international borders. Since the failed coup, hundreds of thousands more people have sought refuge from the junta's atrocities in neighboring countries and beyond. Horrifically, forced returns to Myanmar—including deportations, pushbacks, and other forms of expulsion—have become commonplace, in blatant violation of customary international law—including by Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand. The undeniable reality is that any Myanmar person deported into the hands of the Myanmar military junta will suffer irreparable harm, including being forcibly conscripted, tortured, or used as forced labor, human shields, and landmine sweepers for the junta.

Notably, the Indian government has carried out a systematic crackdown against Myanmar refugees, arbitrarily detaining and unlawfully expelling them, while also loudly proclaiming India's policy and practice of pushing back Myanmar people fleeing the junta's violence and persecution. In early May, the Indian navy violently [forced](#) around 40 Rohingya refugees into the Andaman Sea, completely disregarding the binding principle of *non-refoulement* and demonstrating utter contempt for the refugees' lives and safety.

Furthermore, in 2025, massive sudden and callous aid cuts by government donors—particularly the US—have severely exacerbated the dire humanitarian needs of the millions of Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and other neighboring countries. At the same time, Myanmar refugees continue to face [hate speech](#), discrimination, and marginalization, with neighboring countries systematically denying refugees' access to legal protection, employment, education, healthcare, and other basic essential services.

In Bangladesh, the humanitarian crisis in Rohingya refugee camps has reached unprecedented levels. There, more than 1 million Rohingya refugees continue to face overcrowding, fires, severe food shortages, insufficient and extremely limited healthcare, violence, fear of kidnapping, and heavy restrictions on movement, among other deplorable, inhuman conditions. [Representing](#) more than 75% of the refugee population, Rohingya women and children are especially vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking, and the severe lack of educational opportunities. Major aid cuts have put the health and safety of Rohingya refugees in extreme jeopardy, highlighting an urgent need for the US and other government donors to restore and increase funding for food rations and other lifesaving assistance in the camps.

Every year, thousands of Rohingya embark on extremely dangerous land and sea crossings to escape genocidal persecution in Myanmar and the aforementioned unlivable conditions in Bangladesh. 2024 [was](#) the deadliest year for Rohingya sea/river journeys since 2015. Of particularly grave concern is the recent announcement by the Bangladeshi government in March 2025 that the Myanmar military junta [confirmed](#) that 180,000 Rohingya refugees may be repatriated. The international community has an obligation to intervene to protect Rohingya from forced repatriation, given the junta's ongoing genocide against them, and bolster international support for their safety and protection, including through resettlement. On 30 September 2025, at the UN's High-level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, the international community must develop a clear roadmap with concrete actions to guarantee the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of Rohingya; the restoration of their citizenship; and their protection. This action plan, in consultation with the National Unity Government, the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army, and Rohingya community leaders, must ensure the recognition of the Rohingya—including their identity as Rohingya—not only as one of Myanmar's ethnic groups but also as an equal political stakeholder in the country's new federal democracy.

Along the Thailand-Myanmar border, 110,000 refugees—mainly Karen and Karenni people—across nine refugee camps [are also suffering](#) immeasurable hardship as a result of massive US aid cuts, major reductions in food rations, the suspension of the US's refugee resettlement program, and the lack of access to livelihoods in Thailand. Food rations for children under five years old [have been cut](#) to a meager five US cents per day, and those over five years old now receive only eight US cents per day. Compounding the refugees' existing hardships, this year's US aid cuts [have caused](#) the deaths of multiple refugees in Thailand—including at least two women and two children—by forcing organizations providing lifesaving medical assistance to cease operations and/or [causing](#) patients to avoid seeking medical attention due to the extreme financial burden of being transferred to and treated at local hospitals.

In Malaysia, more than 180,000 Myanmar refugees, including Chin and Rohingya, face real risks of arbitrary arrest, detention, and *refoulement* by the Malaysian government, while also enduring little to no access to healthcare, education, or formal employment. Malaysian immigration authorities have raided religious gatherings, churches, and schools run by refugee organizations, as well as enforced “lockdowns” of apartment blocks and areas where Myanmar refugees live. During the last year, Malaysian authorities have detained thousands of Myanmar refugees, including around 5,000 Chin people, and turned back boats carrying hundreds of Rohingya. Since the illegal coup attempt, an estimated 12,000 Chin refugees have been deported to Myanmar from Malaysia, according to Chin refugee organizations.

IDPs' dire humanitarian needs exacerbated by escalating junta attacks and massive aid cuts

The humanitarian catastrophe for IDPs in Myanmar has also reached unprecedented levels. Millions of IDPs continue to be in extremely desperate need of food, medicine, clean water, shelter, and hygiene supplies. Amid total economic collapse caused by the junta's widespread destruction of the country, IDPs have lost their indigenous communities' way of life and now struggle to earn livelihoods. Across the country, IDPs are also suffering from food insecurity; severe weather conditions, such as devastating floods during monsoon season; nearly no access to education or healthcare; a dearth of sanitation supplies; sexual and gender-based violence; and compounded physical, mental, and emotional trauma with extremely limited access to psychosocial support.

Repeated targeting by the junta's aerial attacks has forced IDPs to flee multiple times, severely straining their capacities to recover and rebuild. The impacts on women and children are particularly dire, as forced displacement—both within Myanmar and across its borders—has caused them to lose access to nutrition, sanitation, healthcare, and education, as well as become vulnerable to human trafficking. As a result, pregnant women have suffered miscarriages, childbirth-related deaths, and other devastating health outcomes.

In Rakhine State, the military junta [is using](#) starvation as a weapon of genocide against 145,000 Rohingya IDPs—who are held in junta-controlled internment camps without freedom of movement and forced to be completely dependent on external humanitarian aid. As of late April 2025, 70% of the 112,000 Rohingya IDPs in Sittwe camps [were facing](#) starvation. Tun Khin, President of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK [said](#), “Starvation has replaced bullets as the main tool of genocide against the Rohingya. US cuts in humanitarian aid are assisting the Burmese military in their genocidal policies of using starvation as a weapon against us.” Moreover, the junta continues to intentionally prevent any humanitarian aid from reaching Rakhine State—as it has for other states and regions where it conducts bombing and shelling attacks. The deliberate denial of aid is a war crime and must be met with swift international condemnation and action.

Countrywide, the junta continues to weaponize, obstruct, and exploit humanitarian aid for its advantage—limiting operational access for aid agencies, blocking transit routes, seizing relief supplies, and arresting and attacking aid workers, medics, community-based responders, and local volunteers. It could not be clearer that any aid channeled through the military will absolutely fail to reach the IDPs in the most urgent need.

Border-based aid channels have proven to be the most reliable, effective means of reaching displaced populations in need, especially in junta-attacked areas. Local and ethnic CBOs possess deep knowledge of and experience in these areas; have earned the trust of local communities; collect and provide accurate, up-to-date information about crisis conditions; and deliver lifesaving assistance rapidly, safely, and efficiently where it is needed most. As one Karen humanitarian worker in eastern Dawei explained, “The only lifeline for many IDPs in our areas is through cross-border aid and local ethnic-based service providers. The international community must stop expecting that aid routed through junta-controlled mechanisms will save lives. It doesn't. We've seen firsthand how it gets blocked, stolen, or used to control populations. Instead, invest in those already working on the ground with trust, integrity, and access.”

Calls for coordinated, collective actions

The Myanmar military is the root cause of the country's worsening human rights and humanitarian crisis. Its relentless campaign of terror has displaced millions, both internally and across borders, as people flee in search of safety. Many of Myanmar's displaced people feel invisible and forgotten; as one IDP woman—a [Civil Disobedience Movement](#) healthcare worker who now lives in a Mon resistance-controlled area—explained, “We didn't flee because we wanted to. We fled because staying meant death. In my native village, I used to treat patients until the junta labeled me a traitor.”

The world must stop ignoring the plight of the Myanmar people. The world must take concerted efforts and coordinated actions not only to end the military's atrocities and hold the perpetrators accountable, but also to robustly support the Myanmar people's resilience, determination, and efforts to build a federal democratic union free from the military tyranny and return home with safety, dignity, and preparedness to rebuild their communities. Solidarity with the people of Myanmar means ensuring their voices are centered in policymaking, program development, and implementation; supporting their leadership; and ensuring the protection of their rights. The international community must increase its support for the diverse skills, knowledge, and capacities of Myanmar's IDPs and refugees by uplifting their voices, heeding their calls, and strengthening their resilience as active peacebuilders and changemakers who are building sustainable solutions for their communities.

On this World Refugee Day, we call on the UN, ASEAN, Myanmar's neighboring countries, and the wider international community to:

- Immediately restore and increase support for humanitarian aid and other forms of assistance for Myanmar's displaced communities;
- Urgently take all necessary actions, including a global arms and aviation fuel embargo, to prevent the Myanmar military junta's commission of further atrocities;
- Join and expedite the Myanmar people's and international efforts to hold the perpetrators of atrocity crimes in Myanmar to account under international law through all available avenues, including by requesting the judges of the ICC to issue an arrest warrant against Min Aung Hlaing without delay;
- Cut all ties and cease all engagement with the Myanmar military junta immediately, and stop lending false legitimacy to the junta, including through international and regional forums;
- Recognize the contribution of, form equal and meaningful partnerships with, and provide robust support to trusted local frontline humanitarian responders operating independently from the junta—including civil society organizations (CSOs), ethnic CBOs, and grassroots women's organizations—in delivering aid and strengthening local resilience through community-led initiatives;
- Support locally led border-based channels for these trusted frontline humanitarian responders to deliver aid to and strengthen the resilience of displaced communities to rebuild sustainable livelihoods;
- Respect and fulfill the international obligation of *non-refoulement*, and halt all arbitrary detention, pushbacks, deportations, and other forced returns of Myanmar people;
- Provide Myanmar refugees with legal protection, as well as access to employment, formal education, healthcare, and other essential services; and
- Support local CSOs, CBOs, and local governance administrations to enable them to establish new and strengthen existing IDP protection mechanisms and programs that address IDPs' specific vulnerabilities in armed conflict settings.

Signed by:

- Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
- Chin Human Rights Organization
- Human Rights Foundation of Monland
- Kachin Women's Association Thailand
- Karen Human Rights Group
- Karen Peace Support Network
- Karenni Civil Society Network
- Karenni National Women's Organization
- Progressive Voice
- RW Welfare Society

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