



Myanmar Labor Alliance (MLA) 136th May Day Statement

“Workers of the world, rise up. Stand firm and fight!”

May 1, 2026

In honor of the workers who fought for and won the historic achievement of the eight-hour working day, we declare:

“Workers of the world, rise up. Stand firm and fight!”

(1) In Myanmar and across the world, workers’ democratic rights, civil rights, and the foundations of social justice are under attack. Military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, together with powerful elites, billionaires, and their affiliated corporations, are tightening their control.

They ignore the needs of the working class, deny fair wages, dignity, and social protection, and shape economic policies to serve their own interests.

As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, deepening inequality and injustice.

The suppression of the right to organize is deliberate. By denying workers the rights to freely assemble and organize, those in power aim to weaken unity and collective strength. This enables them to maintain control over national wealth and resources, while refusing to fairly share the wealth created by workers.

Oppressive regimes show no genuine concern for the future of society. Their priorities are power, profit, and privilege—for themselves and their descendants. Meanwhile, workers and their families are driven deeper into poverty, struggling to live with dignity.

Workers and labor activists who stand up for their rights face threats, violence, imprisonment, and even death. Independent trade unions are dismantled, while deceptive, employer- or military-linked organizations are created to divide and weaken the labor movement.

To halt and dismantle these conditions, now is the time for workers, farmers, and the oppressed masses to unite and struggle with the spirit of May Day and solidarity.

Only through unity and collective struggle can we build a just society—one that guarantees dignity, equality, and opportunity for future generations.

(2) In Myanmar as well, under the gun-backed rule of the military dictatorship, workers and farmers are facing the following conditions:

- Workers, farmers, and the general population are experiencing widespread economic hardship, insecurity, and violations of fundamental rights. Workers across the country face declining incomes, rising living costs, and shrinking employment opportunities. Many endure low wages, excessive working hours, unsafe working conditions, and lack of social protection. Labor rights violations—including wage exploitation, forced overtime, and workplace harassment—are increasing, leaving workers unable to live with dignity.
- At the same time, workers' rights to organize and defend their interests are severely restricted. Freedom of association is under attack through intimidation, arrests, surveillance, and repression of trade union activities. As a result, workers cannot freely express grievances or engage in collective bargaining, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation.
- Farmers and agricultural workers are among the most severely affected. Climate-related disasters such as floods and storms have destroyed crops and livelihoods, pushing many small-scale farmers into debt. In some cases, farmers are forced to sell or abandon their land, leading to poverty, food insecurity, and instability in rural areas. Forced labor and displacement further reduce agricultural productivity and harm rural economies.
- Child labor has emerged as a serious and growing concern. Due to the economic crisis and repression by the military regime, many children are forced to work in industrial zones and agriculture, often using falsified identification. They endure long working hours, including night shifts, under harsh conditions. Instead of protection, they face threats when they attempt to speak out. This not only violates international labor standards but also endangers the health, education, and future of an entire generation.
- Forced military conscription has further worsened the situation. Reports indicate that civilians, including youth, are being compelled to join the military under coercive conditions. Many families are forced to pay money to avoid conscription, while others face arrest or forced recruitment. This has caused widespread fear, displacement,

and loss of livelihoods—particularly in rural areas, where labor shortages weaken agricultural production. It also restricts workers' mobility and increases their vulnerability to exploitation.

- Job insecurity is widespread, especially among youth and migrant workers. Many are trapped in unstable jobs characterized by low wages, irregular hours, and lack of legal protection. These conditions contribute to the rise of child labor, unsafe and forced migration, human trafficking, and long-term social inequality.
- Under a system that prioritizes power and profit over human dignity and social justice, the working and living conditions of workers and farmers continue to deteriorate. Combined with economic decline and ongoing conflict, labor repression has intensified exploitation and created increasingly insecure livelihoods.
- This situation demands urgent attention and collective action. Workers and farmers must be able to exercise their rights freely, work under fair and safe conditions, and access equal economic opportunities.

Only through justice, dignity, and solidarity can a better future for all be built.

(3) On this May Day, we call on workers, farmers, and oppressed people to stand up and fight:

In response to the worsening conditions of workers' rights, farmers' livelihoods, and fundamental freedoms, urgent action is required at national, revolutionary, and international levels.

(a) Reject illegitimate systems, institutions, and individuals. Oppose and refuse to recognize sham electoral processes organized by the military regime, as they lack legitimacy and accountability.

(b) Support and implement measures under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution. Governments, employers, and international organizations must fully enforce these measures, including reviewing and suspending any engagement that directly or indirectly contributes to forced labor and the suppression of freedom of association.

(c) Avoid complaint and judicial mechanisms that lack independence. Do not rely on dispute resolution systems, complaint bodies, or courts that are controlled or influenced by perpetrators of human and labor rights violations. These mechanisms cannot provide justice or protection. Instead, utilize international accountability mechanisms. Victims and survivors should submit complaints and evidence to

international bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

(d) Pursue legal action at national and international levels outside Myanmar. Hold perpetrators accountable through foreign courts with jurisdiction, as well as international legal institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC).

(e) Expose and oppose fake labor organizations and individuals. Reject military-linked or fraudulent groups that aim to weaken and divide genuine worker representation. Do not recognize them as legitimate representatives of workers.

(f) Review and avoid harmful relationships. Governments, employers, companies, and organizations must reassess and avoid ties with entities linked to the Myanmar military where such relationships contribute to labor and human rights violations.

(g) Cut financial flows that support abuses. Governments, financial institutions, and corporations must end funding, investments, and business relationships that benefit individuals responsible for repression, forced labor, and exploitation. Economic pressure is essential to stop abuses.

(h) Strengthen labor rights due diligence in global supply chains. International brands and companies must ensure that their supply chains are free from child labor, forced labor, and exploitation through strict human rights and labor rights monitoring. Violations must lead to accountability, not concealment.

(i) Build unity and collective resistance. Workers, farmers, and communities must strengthen solidarity across sectors and borders, support independent labor movements, protect activists, and continue building collective power to demand justice, dignity, and democratic rights.

“Fight for democracy. Fight for freedom. Fight for justice.”

With revolutionary solidarity,

Myanmar Labor Alliance (MLA)

myanmarlaboralliance@protonmail.com