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MYANMAR CIVIL SOCIETY’S LETTER TO AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MARISE PAYNE DEMANDING IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST THE MYANMAR MILITARY JUNTA

MAY 18TH, 2021 • AUTHOR: 390 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN MYANMAR • 3 MINUTE READ

Open Letter အိတ်ဖွင့်ပေးစာ

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Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CAMBERRA ACT 2600

Subject: Myanmar civil society’s letter to Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne demanding immediate action against the Myanmar military junta

Date: 18 May 2021

Dear Minister Payne,

We 390 civil society organisations across Myanmar are shocked by Australia’s continued inaction on Myanmar, which emboldens the terrorist military junta.

We note that Australia has not imposed sanctions on the military leadership, including the Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar military, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, or their conglomerates Myanmar Economic Corporation or Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited, in stark contrast to the actions taken by Australia's allies the US, Canada, EU and UK.

We are deeply disappointed in your Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's assessment that additional sanctions on Myanmar would not have a positive impact on the ground.

It is difficult for us to comprehend how Australia has come to draw such conclusions in this assessment. We are on the ground, in diverse communities across Myanmar. We are part of the masses, risking our lives to oppose the military's criminal junta. In attempting its coup, the military is continuing to commit crimes against humanity, murdering children, while conducting air strikes on ethnic communities in acts that contravene the Geneva Conventions. We strongly call for Australia and the international community to take action against these criminals through targeted sanctions and other appropriate measures.

Over 100 days have passed since the military staged a coup – this attempted coup is failing. For the coup to succeed the military wants recognition. By failing to act against these murderers, by failing to even sanction Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and its other band of criminals including Vice Senior General Soe Win, Australia is sending a strong signal to the military junta that their actions can be tolerated. This must immediately stop.

As Myanmar civil society, we will continue to stand up to the brutal junta and support our communities in this desperate time. Australia's shameful inaction is discouraging to those who continue to stand for the protection and promotion of democracy and human rights, while emboldening the very perpetrators of heinous atrocity crimes. The time for words and statements have long passed and action from Australia is long overdue. We look to your decisive and immediate action as we continue to put our lives at risk for the future of our country.

We demand that you take the following immediate steps:

1. Impose sanctions on military junta leaders, including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Vice Senior General Soe Win, their families and businesses;
2. Impose sanctions on Myanmar military conglomerates and their significant business associates;
3. Impose sanctions on state-owned enterprises;
4. Pressure Adani Ports to stop financing the Myanmar military;
5. Support calls for a global arms embargo to be imposed on Myanmar; and
6. Join action at the International Court of Justice to hold the Myanmar military accountable for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sincerely,

390 civil society organisations based in Myanmar

Note: Due to safety and security reasons, names of civil society organisations based in Myanmar will not be disclosed.

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Progressive Voice is a participatory rights-based policy research and advocacy organization rooted in civil society, that maintains strong networks and relationships with grassroots organizations and community-based organizations throughout Myanmar. It acts as a bridge to the international community and international policymakers by amplifying voices from the ground, and advocating for a rights-based policy narrative.

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