



## **Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR**

### **SAC-M raises alarm over growing likelihood of major lethal crackdown in Myanmar and calls for immediate intervention**

*14 March 2021:* The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar is alarmed at the escalating use of violence by the Myanmar military against the anti-coup civilian movement. It expresses grave concerns that a major military crackdown may be imminent, with fatal consequences. It calls for immediate international political intervention to halt the violence and engage all parties in dialogue.

For the past six weeks the people of Myanmar have resisted the attempted military coup by mobilizing massive nationwide peaceful protests, a non-violent civil disobedience movement and debilitating public and private sector strikes.

The military, called Tatmadaw, has responded by deploying its most brutal battle units to Myanmar's main cities. Security forces and police around the country have murdered, beaten, detained, tortured and disappeared civilians, including children, in an attempt to terrorize the population into submission.

As it has done in the past, the Tatmadaw seems ready to crush the civilian resistance and impose military rule on Myanmar by lethal force. The repression is steadily escalating in intensity, consistent with the strategy of the Tatmadaw in past major military offensives, or so-called "clearance operations".

"The recent behaviour of the military and security forces is deeply disturbing, as it calls to mind the days and weeks leading up to the massive genocidal offensive against the Rohingya in northern Rakhine in 2017" says Yanghee Lee, founding member of SAC-M.

The junta has shut off internet access for 28 consecutive nights and revoked the licenses of the few remaining independent media outlets which had been reporting on the anti-coup protests. Soldiers have also raided the offices of media outlets, seizing servers and destroying equipment. Medical workers and ambulances responding to those injured in the protests have

been directly targeted by the security forces. In recent days soldiers have begun occupying public hospitals and universities around the country by force. As a result of the military repression, efforts to defeat the Covid pandemic have been severely set back and the entire country is now at serious risk of the health emergency expanding rapidly, including across the region.

Without immediate political intervention, a major crackdown with fatal consequences is inevitable, perhaps in the next few days. SAC-M calls for an immediate visit to Myanmar and to the South East Asia region by the United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar or a joint visit to Myanmar by the Special Envoy and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Special Envoy and the delegation should meet with all relevant parties in the country, including the Acting Government led by Acting Vice President Mahn Win Khaing Than, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the Peace Process Steering Team, the Civil Disobedience Movement and General Strike Committees, ethnic political parties and organisations, trade unions, students groups and religious organisations, as well as the Tatmadaw.

So far, the international response to the attempted coup has been weak. It is sending a dangerous message that the generals will continue to suffer no meaningful repercussions for their violent attacks on the Myanmar people. Last week Myanmar civil society organisations derided the silence of United Nations agencies in Myanmar, where only 5 out of 20 programmes, agencies and departments have publicly commented on the coup. The organisations urged United Nations heads in Myanmar to end their silence, speak out and take action. Human rights up front must not become mere rhetoric again in Myanmar, as it had during genocidal “clearance operations” against the Rohingya in 2017.

The international community has repeatedly failed to protect the people of Myanmar from the atrocities of the Tatmadaw. It is time to end the cycle of failure and take action now in the name of our shared humanity, before history repeats itself and the world looks on once again as tragedy unfolds before our eyes.