



## **Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR**

### **Former UN Experts Launch Independent “Special Advisory Council for Myanmar”**

*01 March 2021:* One month after the military coup, three international experts on Myanmar have joined forces in a new independent group to support the peoples of Myanmar in their fight for human rights, democracy, peace, justice and accountability.

The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar, or SAC-M, has been formed to provide an international platform for civil society organisations, human rights defenders and activists in Myanmar, and other experts on Myanmar, to ensure their voices are heard by key stakeholders and decision-makers. The SAC-M’s founding members are Yanghee Lee, former UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Marzuki Darusman, former chair of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar and Chris Sidoti, former member of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

For the past ten years Myanmar’s military has yielded a limited degree of power to democratically elected governments under the Constitution it drafted in 2008. In November, the National League for Democracy won a second term in office under these constitutional arrangements with a resounding electoral victory. But unsatisfied with this result, and with disregard for the immense challenges caused by ongoing civil war, COVID-19 and severe economic recession already facing people in Myanmar, on 1 February 2021 the Generals staged an unconstitutional coup d’etat plunging the country into further crisis.

“For more than half a century the Myanmar military has oppressed the peoples of Myanmar, stifled their efforts to establish federal democracy, and committed grave human rights violations against them with impunity” says Yanghee Lee. “Last month’s appalling coup is yet another demonstration of the Generals’ blatant disregard for the will of the people and international norms.”

The military’s actions have been met with nationwide public outrage. A nonviolent Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and general strikes by public and private sector workers have

brought government to a standstill. Peaceful protestors in their hundreds of thousands are finding ways to evade the military's internet shutdowns and organise to gather, day in and day out.

“The people of Myanmar are speaking out fearlessly and the message is clear: we will not let another generation suffer under the tyranny of military rule” says Marzuki Darusman. “We stand with them in their fight for human rights, peace, democracy, justice and accountability.”

The military and police are responding to the protests with intimidation, arrests, violence and increasingly lethal use of force. Violent suppression is escalating, with the numbers of protestors being killed, injured and beaten by security forces rising by the day. There are grave fears that the crackdown will continue to intensify. For Myanmar's many ethnic nationalities and religious minorities, fear of the military's brutality is already a terrible fact of daily life. During the past decade, the military's deadly offensives against civilians from ethnic and religious minorities reached unprecedented proportions, leading to allegations of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Chris Sidoti explains “The tragic events of the past in Myanmar are destined to be repeated until impunity is ended and accountability ensured. This is the time for businesses to take a stand and cut all ties with the military.”

The Council will draw on their collective expertise to advise Myanmar human rights organisations, defenders and activists on their strategies and will advocate to amplify their voices. The three founders could be joined by other concerned experts on Myanmar in the new Council.

For more information, please contact:

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