



## **Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR**

### **ASEAN Special Envoy: Engage with True Representatives of the Myanmar People**

*06 Aug 2021:* The newly appointed ASEAN Special Envoy to Myanmar must secure an end to the Myanmar military junta's violence and engage with true representatives of the people of Myanmar, starting with the National Unity Government (NUG), says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

The appointment of Erywan Yusof, Foreign Affairs Minister II of Brunei Darussalam, as the ASEAN Special Envoy to Myanmar must mark a turning point in ASEAN's efforts to resolve a crisis caused six months ago by junta leader Min Aung Hlaing. ASEAN took three months to appoint the Special Envoy after reaching its five-point consensus and neglected to consult anyone other than the junta.

"After months of delay and hundreds of deaths, there's no time to be lost. Implementation of the five-point consensus is now urgent," said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M. "It should start with the Special Envoy securing an immediate total nationwide ceasefire by the military and the withdrawal of the military to barracks."

The new Special Envoy has already been leading the 10-country regional bloc's efforts to resolve the crisis in his capacity as representative of the ASEAN Chair.

During this time, the killing of almost 1,000 democracy activists, peaceful protesters and other civilians by the junta have been verified. More than 5,000 more have been detained. Months of devastating air strikes and artillery fire by the military in massive assaults on civilian areas have killed many more and displaced at least 230,000. Entire villages are either deserted or in ruins.

The junta's atrocities have only strengthened the people's commitment to resistance and the democracy movement, represented by the NUG. There is no going back to the quasi-democratic system in place before the coup.

“ASEAN's efforts thus far, waiting for Min Aung Hlaing's consent before acting, have been unacceptable,” said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. “After six months, it is clear that the junta has neither the military nor the political might to overcome the democracy movement. To ensure any progress, the Special Envoy must engage in dialogue with the NUG, as well as the junta.”

The need for engagement with true representatives of the Myanmar people has been made clear by the catastrophic third wave of COVID-19 in Myanmar, which the junta not only allowed to run free but weaponised for its own political gain.

A decentralised network of local responders, ethnic service providers, civil society organisations, humanitarian groups and others aligned to the democracy movement has been fighting to keep people alive in the vacuum left by the junta's inability to establish ordinary government functions or assert even a semblance of control. The NUG and Ethnic Health Organisation COVID-19 Task Force is directing cross-border efforts to get life-saving assistance into Myanmar and distributed to where it is needed.

“ASEAN's inertia has already emboldened the junta as it commits atrocities that amount to crimes against humanity,” said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. “If the Special Envoy continues to engage only with the junta, he will be taken for a ride while the people of Myanmar suffer the consequences.”