



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

People in Myanmar on the brink of starvation

26 November 2021: People throughout Myanmar are facing starvation. The world can either watch on or resolve the military junta-made crisis by formally recognising and engaging with the legitimate representatives of the Myanmar people – the National Unity Government (NUG), says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

Across Myanmar the military junta has blocked access roads, cutting off communities' food and medical supplies, burned food stores and killed livestock. Repeated military offensives have prevented farmers in the northwest and east from planting and harvesting their yearly rice crops which are the main source of local food supply. People throughout the country are facing starvation as a result.

“Instead of wringing our hands wondering what to do, the international community can and must work formally with the NUG and get assistance across borders into the country and to the people who need it,” said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M. **“There are trusted local humanitarian and medical networks including ethnic service providers, community-based and civil society organisations that are already helping people. They need to be supported and empowered.”**

The military junta has waged a brutal assault on the people of Myanmar for ten long months after junta leader Min Aung Hlaing attempted an illegal coup in February that was wholly resisted by the people and ignited a nationwide movement to liberate Myanmar from the military's shadow once and for all.

Min Aung Hlaing's forces have committed daily acts of terrorism since the coup and launched a widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population amounting to crimes against humanity. The intentional deprivation of food constitutes an element of such a crime.

The military junta has remained intransigent to international efforts and appeals for it to change course. Junta representatives, including Min Aung Hlaing, have rightly been prevented from participating in key international meetings. Their exclusions underline the international community's refusal to recognise the military junta or grant it legitimacy.

“Actions that could be perceived as legitimising the junta are a betrayal to the people of Myanmar who are laying down their lives for their country's freedom,” said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. **“Anyone claiming to accommodate the military in the interests of the people is in fact only prolonging their suffering. These actions can be viewed as being complicit in the military's crimes.”**

However, Myanmar has gone unrepresented at international meetings as a result of the international community's reluctance to formally recognise the NUG as the legitimate government of Myanmar. The lack of formal engagement with the true representatives of Myanmar is stalling urgently needed international responses to the military junta-made crises.

“Failure to recognise and engage with the NUG risks undermining the people’s democratic movement, the single direction of which is towards the people’s complete political liberation from the tyrannical yoke of the nation's totally dishonoured Tatmadaw,” said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. **“We cannot allow a vacuum to arise leaving the door open for undemocratic bilateral deal-making by major external forces and interests amounting to illegitimate interferences in internal matters and a plundering of the nation's natural resources.”**

Effective and appropriate international assistance for Myanmar is critically needed. The military junta is the cause of the suffering in Myanmar, it is not a solution. The international community must formally recognise the NUG and engage consistently with it to enable a coherent international response to the urgent and overlapping political, security, humanitarian, human rights and economic crises.