



Revolutionary Systems of Local Governance in Myanmar Should Receive International Assistance

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The people of Myanmar are resolved to defeat the military junta and establish a genuine federal democracy. The revolution is already forming systems of local governance to provide essential services to people, with immediate implications for the delivery of international humanitarian assistance, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

A panel of esteemed representatives from key institutions within Myanmar's democratic revolution joined an online public event hosted by SAC-M on Thursday 26 May, to discuss the theme **"Building the New Myanmar from the Ground Up."**

"We, the people of Myanmar, know we have to defeat this evil [tyrant] military in order to [achieve] a peaceful, prosperous federal union that guarantees self-determination, equality and justice," His Excellency Duwa Lashi La, Acting President of the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG), told the panel. **"Within one year we've achieved significant success despite numerous challenges."**

"The junta has created a humanitarian crisis that threatens the stability of the entire region. A priority of the NUG is to deliver unhindered humanitarian assistance to the people of Myanmar," the President explained.

Padoh Saw Taw Nee, Head of Foreign Affairs of the Karen National Union (KNU) told the panel that the KNU, which runs 14 administrative departments in southeast Myanmar including education, health, agriculture and transport, has expanded its social service provision in response to rapidly escalating humanitarian needs caused by the military's attempted coup and subsequent attacks.

"After the coup we have been able to mobilise several administrative departments across seven districts to accommodate tens of thousands of fleeing politicians, lawyers, doctors, CDM-ers, activists, journalists as well as freedom fighters," said Padoh Saw Taw Nee. **"We would like to request the international community to please strengthen our existing humanitarian mechanisms so we can reach our people who are most in need."**

The panel also heard from Salai Ram Kulh Cung, Chair of the Central Executive Committee of the Chin National Front (CNF) in northwest Myanmar.





“When we look back after one year, we see that the people are able to run local administration health services and education services and also [assistance] for [internally displaced persons] and CDM-ers,” Salai Ram Kulh Cung told the panel. **“We are now moving towards building strong institutions in the coming years, like hospitals; within one year we’re able to have several clinics and hospitals and do major operations by ourselves. This is a great development we’re seeing in health services in just one year.”**

“We have to strengthen these local and ethnic institutions to be stronger to support this ground up change,” Salai Ram Kulh Cung emphasised. **“This is how we can help Myanmar gain federal democracy.”**

The CNF and KNU both have long-established administrations in the respective territories they hold along Myanmar’s borders with India and Thailand. In addition to the governance systems of Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations (EROs) such as the CNF and KNU, so-called People’s Administrations are also forming in areas where the military junta’s violent attempts to enforce itself as the local authority have collapsed.

The Mindat People’s Administrative Committee (Mindat PAC) was formed several months after the attempted coup. Salai Tumi, First Secretary of the Mindat PAC, explained that the Committee has been able to organise administrative units at township level into different departments such as health, education, financial, judicial, police, agriculture and food.

“Our priorities are to support [the Chin Defence Force] Mindat, provide healthcare and basic education for the public and at the same time to regulate public affairs in accordance with our Chin customs and practices with the cooperation between the police force and judicial departments in these dark times,” said Salai Tumi.

“Humanitarian assistance is the most important thing we need right now. We just need this to survive. The junta is using aid as a weapon. They are restricting [International Non-Governmental Organisations] access to townships and limiting aid delivery to the people,” explained Salai Tumi.

The information provided by each of the panellists has immediate implications for the delivery of international humanitarian assistance to Myanmar. Revolutionary systems of local governance are already providing essential services directly to those in need of emergency aid in much of the country, despite being faced with the constant threat of attack from the military junta and having seriously limited resources. There





is no justification for withholding international humanitarian assistance from these organisations.

“What has been laid out gives a very clear direction and clear aspiration to work closely with the international community. This is precisely the aspects of what is going on in the regions [of Myanmar] that needs to be known much more by the international community,” said Marzuki Darusman, SAC-M founding member and former chair of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. **“In truth the source of legitimacy in Myanmar is with the regions, and therefore these speakers are the source of political legitimacy in the country.”**

Yanghee Lee, SAC-M founding member and former UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar moderated the discussion.

“Today it is so clear that the building of a new Myanmar is happening from the ground up by the people, by the EROs, by the local administrative committees, by the regional governments, and this is why the international community needs to better understand,” Yanghee Lee concluded. **“And I will echo the sentiments of His Excellency the Acting President: do not delay support, do not delay the support for the Myanmar people in achieving their common goal for a federal democratic Myanmar.”**

The panel discussion can be viewed in full on the SAC-M website, available here: <https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/2022/05/building-the-new-myanmar/>

