



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

Eve of the Sham Elections: States Must Act to End Myanmar Junta's Atrocities and Reject its Empty Power Grab

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The Myanmar military junta continues to ramp up its atrocity operations two days out from the start of its sham elections, which commence on 28 December.

The international community, including ASEAN and the UN, must condemn the junta's atrocities and take concrete measures to prevent further civilian casualties, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

"The only election campaigning taking place in Myanmar is the junta's campaign of terror against civilians," said SAC-M Member Yanghee Lee. **"The junta is committing atrocities while pretending to hold genuine elections. Any governments that legitimise the junta or its sham elections will be complicit in its crimes."**

The junta controls less than 40 percent of the country's territory. It cannot conduct elections in the other 60 percent and so it attacks. Relentless aerial attacks on civilian gatherings, hospitals, and homes in resistance-controlled and liberated areas, as well as the arbitrary detention and torture of perceived opponents, have been part of a deadly surge in junta violence in recent weeks.

On 10 December, a junta airstrike on a public hospital in Mrauk-U township, Rakhine State, killed at least [34 people](#) and wounded [at least 70](#) others. The attack drew global condemnation, including from [ASEAN](#), the [World Health Organisation](#), and from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk who said the attack may amount to a war crime. "I call for investigations and those responsible to be held to account," Türk said in a [Facebook post](#).

Despite this outcry, the junta remains undeterred in its violations. Since the Mrauk-U hospital bombing, dozens of civilians have been killed in targeted junta air strikes across Sagaing and Mandalay regions, according to [reports](#).



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Hundreds have been arrested for opposing the elections. There are grave concerns for the safety of pro-democracy activist Ko Htet Myat Aung, who was arbitrarily detained by the junta on 14 December. Sources say the 24-year-old has been severely tortured in detention and has life-threatening injuries. Ko Htet Myat Aung was one of 10 activists wanted by the junta under its "Election Protection Law" for leading a peaceful flash-mob demonstration against the sham elections in Mandalay on 3 December. The junta has refused to provide any information on his current condition.

Last week the junta announced that at least [229 people](#) have been detained under the same "law", which punishes dissent through extreme sanctions, including the death penalty.

The junta's use of such draconian measures to silence opponents exposes its elections as a new means of repressing the population as well as a cynical ploy to manufacture legitimacy. The elections are not a free and fair expression of the will of the Myanmar people but a process engineered by the junta to [ensure the dominance](#) of its proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

ASEAN, Myanmar's neighbours and the broader international community must take urgent measures to prevent further attacks on civilians.

SAC-M calls on States to reject the sham elections absolutely and to refrain from any engagement that would confer legitimacy on the junta or any proxy body it appoints.

SAC-M also urges the international community to support legitimate pro-democracy actors in Myanmar, while hobbling the junta through targeted financial sanctions and coordinated embargoes that cut its access to cash, weapons and aviation fuel.

Finally, States must redouble their efforts to prosecute accused war criminal and junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and his junta acolytes and cronies – including those he's appointed to the ranks of the USDP – and hold them accountable for their heinous crimes.

