



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

Timor-Leste's Commitment to Accountability Marks an ASEAN Turning Point on Myanmar

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Timor-Leste has shown immediate leadership in the opening months of its ASEAN membership, meeting its [commitment to peace](#), says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar.

In early February, Timor-Leste appointed a prosecutor to explore potential proceedings against the Myanmar military junta, including junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, for war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to the [Myanmar Accountability Project](#), it is the first time an ASEAN member has initiated such action against a fellow member, marking a turning point for the bloc.

Timor-Leste's universal jurisdiction initiative joins a growing list of efforts to put Min Aung Hlaing in the dock. Last February, an [Argentine Court](#) issued arrest warrants for 25 senior Myanmar officials, including Min Aung Hlaing, in connection with genocide and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya. This followed a November 2024 request by the [Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) for an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing for the alleged crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya. Just last month, the [International Court of Justice](#) held public hearings and heard oral arguments in The Gambia's case against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention.

Predictably, the junta's reprisals against Timor-Leste have been swift and petty. It has ejected Timor-Leste's chargé d'affaires from the country, complaining that Timor-Leste breached ASEAN's principle of non-interference in each other's affairs. But the military junta's flagrant atrocities and the regional crisis it has triggered deeply impacts all ASEAN members, individually and collectively.

ASEAN's response to Timor-Leste's initiative should therefore be straightforward – back Timor-Leste and crackdown on the junta. For more than five years, ASEAN has endured relentless humiliation at the junta's hands. Its Five-Point Consensus lasted all of 48 hours before Min Aung Hlaing reneged on his commitments. The years since



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have seen the junta commit mass atrocities, weaponize starvation and natural disasters, block humanitarian aid, displace millions of people, and forcibly conscript tens of thousands of Myanmar youths to fight their own people. The junta has unleashed a multifaceted crisis that has bled across borders and enabled transnational crime to thrive.

The Philippines, now ASEAN Chair, showed its commitment to international law when it facilitated the arrest and transfer of [former President Rodrigo Duterte](#) to the ICC for the alleged crimes against humanity of murder, torture and rape. A hearing will take place in The Hague [this week](#) to confirm the charges against Duterte.

The Philippines must now lead ASEAN in these same principled steps on Myanmar. When the ICC – as widely expected – issues an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing (assuming it has not already done so on a “Secret” basis), the Philippines should publicly confirm that it will cooperate with the Court in securing his arrest and transfer to The Hague. Timor-Leste will join them. Malaysia and Singapore must add their support. So too should Indonesia as current [President of the UN Human Rights Council](#), and given that its new Criminal Code (KUHP) provides for universal jurisdiction over the most serious international crimes, including genocide and crimes against humanity.

After holding firm in rejecting the junta's fraudulent elections, ASEAN members must bring even stronger resolve to securing justice for the people of Myanmar.

Holding Min Aung Hlaing and his accomplices to account would open new opportunities for a future that fully respects the Myanmar people's aspirations, interests and democratic will. It would also lift ASEAN's standing and send a sharp warning to other power-hungry military men in the region.

