



Old Generals, New Clothes:

The Myanmar Junta's Illegitimate 2025-26 Elections
and the Way Forward

SAC-M and ANFREL's New Joint Report: The Myanmar Junta's Illegitimate 2025-26 Elections and the Way Forward

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The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) and the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) today launched their joint report '[Old Generals, New Clothes: The Myanmar Junta's Illegitimate 2025-26 Elections and the Way Forward](#)'.

The report scrutinises the military junta's staged "elections" – conducted over three phases in December 2025 and January 2026 – and shows how they comprehensively failed to meet internationally recognised standards for genuine elections.

"The "elections" organised by the junta cannot be considered legitimate. This assessment is not only grounded in evidence but also reflective of the lived realities on the ground," Brizza Rosales, Executive Director of ANFREL, said earlier today during an online launch event.

"Based on the evidence assessed in this report...what we have seen is not an election that reflects the will of the people but a process that falls short of international standards and therefore lacks democratic legitimacy."

Every aspect of the junta's illegitimate elections, from its election management body to the design of the electoral system and the selection of political parties was carefully engineered to ensure a predetermined outcome to the benefit of the junta's proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

The elections were held in only 42 percent of Myanmar's territory under a restrictive legal framework that barred legitimate political competition, including Myanmar's most popular and successful parties.

The junta's elections were the culmination of a years-long strategy to undermine democracy in Myanmar, driven in large part by junta leader and alleged war criminal Min Aung Hlaing's personal ambition to secure Myanmar's "presidency" at any cost.

In the five years since his 2021 coup attempt, Min Aung Hlaing has unleashed a polycrisis of atrocity crimes, political imprisonment, forced displacement, dire humanitarian need, and economic instability that continues to damage and divide the entire region.



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“The staged elections failed to meet international standards on numerous counts,” said Amaël Vier, an election expert and the report’s lead writer. **“This was purely an exercise to create a “parliament” regardless of the will of the people.”**

Despite benefiting from a process engineered to ensure its dominance, the USDP received only 44 to 45 percent of votes cast across the country, Vier said.

“People were forced to vote, there was a lot of intimidation, pressure, and harassment, and still, they rejected the USDP,” he added.

The report draws on extensive human rights documentation by the United Nations and Myanmar civil society to show how the junta instrumentalised systematic violence, repressed democratic freedoms, manipulated humanitarian aid and militarised surveillance to pave the way for its “elections” and to punish and terrorise perceived opponents – all in plain view of the international community.

The junta’s “elections” did not therefore signal a democratic opening. Rather, they were a means to entrench military control over the levers of state and to gaslight the international community into gifting the junta the legitimacy it so desperately needs. The grave risk now is that through expediency, apathy or both, countries will normalise their relationships with the junta.

“It is beyond absurd that the junta’s “parliament”, as a lawmaking body, can draw even a passing glance of seriousness when the junta has for years employed violence as a policy and has manipulated the law as a repressive tool,” said Ben Lee, Executive Director of SAC-M.

“In short, any country that confers legitimacy on the junta is complicit in its crimes.”

With astonishing resilience, Myanmar’s pro-democracy Spring Revolution movement continues to resist the junta’s brutal war machine, while building a burgeoning consensus around a shared vision for a new constitution that enshrines civilian governance, self-determination, equality and justice.

The Myanmar people are actively forging a new democratic path, as their widespread rejection of the junta’s empty elections proved. The report explores recent [developments](#) at both the sub-national and Union levels that show the tangible progress being made toward this vision.

Drawing on views from within Myanmar, the report concludes by listing actions that



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the international community, including ASEAN and UN forums, must take to support the Myanmar people's genuine democratic will and aspirations.

Among these actions, the international community must reaffirm its political, financial, material, and humanitarian support for legitimate pro-democracy actors and emerging federal democratic institutions, including the newly launched Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), ethnic organisations and councils, the National Unity Government (NUG), emerging state units and alliances, civil society and minority communities.

It must also isolate the junta and stop its atrocity crimes, including by blocking its access to cash, munitions, jet fuel, dual-use items, and surveillance technology, and by outright rejecting the junta's illegitimate elections and refusing to confer legitimacy on the junta in its current or any future form.

Finally, the international community must also hold Min Aung Hlaing and other senior junta members to account and finally put an end to the decades of military impunity that have enabled repeated cycles of violence and political upheaval without consequence.