

## Philippines Must Deliver Strong ASEAN Leadership on Myanmar After Five Years of Dismal Failure

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders' Summit in Cebu this week comes at a pivotal moment for Myanmar, with accused war criminal Min Aung Hlaing and his junta desperate to normalise ties with the bloc.

Recent months have seen the junta deliver half-measures aimed at placating ASEAN and the international community. First an [illegitimate election](#). Next the convening of a fake parliament headed by a fake "President" in Min Aung Hlaing. And more recently the junta's unverified claims to have moved State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to house arrest after her years-long solitary and incommunicado detention in conditions that likely constituted torture.

Yet all the while, the junta has intensified its atrocity campaigns against the Myanmar people. March 2026 set a new record as the deadliest month for civilians since the junta's 2021 coup, with indiscriminate junta attacks claiming more than [500 lives](#).

After years of humiliation at the junta's hands, including Min Aung Hlaing reneging on the Five-Point Consensus, ASEAN must accept that the tiger's stripes won't change. It cannot mistake junta half-measures as genuine concessions against the backdrop of the junta's unabated brutality.

The Philippines as ASEAN Chair must use the Cebu Summit to drive a hard line that demands full measures from the junta. This must lead ASEAN to adopt a new decision on Myanmar that:

- Rejects the junta's new proxy administration and refuses to engage with its representatives by expanding the ban on junta representatives at ASEAN meetings to include working-level junta officials. ASEAN must starve the junta of the legitimacy it needs to survive.
- Demands the immediate cessation of all junta violence and the immediate, full and unconditional release of all political prisoners. The reported relocation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to house arrest is a positive step if true, but it remains arbitrary detention.



Independent monitors, medical personnel and her family members must be granted immediate access to the State Counsellor.

- Continues to recognise U Win Myint – who was recently released from years of junta solitary confinement and remains subject to surveillance and restrictions – as Myanmar’s legitimate President.
- Demands full humanitarian access throughout the country, including through cross-border channels to scale-up the urgent delivery of assistance to all communities in need. This must see coordinated responses by ASEAN, UN entities, Myanmar ethnic and civil society organisations and Myanmar’s neighbours.
- Strengthens stakeholder engagement platforms with legitimate democratic actors and institutions in Myanmar to support the inclusive negotiation of a new federal democratic constitution, in accordance with the will and aspirations of the people and without preconditions. This ASEAN platform must involve the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union, ethnic organisations and councils, the National Unity Government, emerging state and federal units and alliances, civil society and minority communities, including those who have been forced to leave Myanmar.
- Presses ahead on accountability efforts in Myanmar, including by confirming ASEAN’s support for the [appointment by Timor-Leste](#) of a prosecutor to explore potential proceedings against Min Aung Hlaing and other junta members for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, and also welcoming early [steps in Indonesia](#). When the International Criminal Court (ICC) – as widely expected – issues an arrest warrant for Min Aung Hlaing, the Philippines and other ASEAN Members must cooperate with the Court in securing his arrest and transfer to the Hague.

Finally, ASEAN must strengthen the role of its Special Envoy on Myanmar, including through a longer-term full-time appointment and increased staffing and resources through a strengthened Office of the Special Envoy.

The cost of ASEAN restraint is clear, as Myanmar’s junta-triggered crises become more intractable and increase in threat to regional stability. The Philippines must seize on its window to act.

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