

Joint statement: Myanmar must lift internet restrictions following devastating earthquake

Monday March 31, 2025

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, strongly condemn the Myanmar military for continuing to impose communication blackouts, including internet shutdowns, following Myanmar's worst earthquake in history. We call for restrictions on internet services, including social media platforms and news media websites, to be immediately lifted.

On March 28, 2025, Myanmar experienced a magnitude 7.7 earthquake, the strongest ever recorded in the country's history, impacting at least 67 townships. The epicenter was in Sagaing city, near Mandalay, the central part of the country. The most affected areas include Sagaing, Mandalay, and the country's capital, Naypyitaw. The death toll has risen to more than 2,000 as of March 31 and continues to climb.

However, despite this dire situation and the urgent need for emergency rescue efforts to save those trapped under the rubble, as of this announcement — more than 48 hours after the earthquake — the Myanmar military has still not lifted its internet shutdown orders and various internet restrictions, which are essential for coordinating live-saving emergency responses.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the Myanmar military's ongoing crackdown on communication services following such a devastating disaster, showing a blatant disregard for the threat imposed on civilian lives. **We demand** the immediate and unconditional restoration of internet and communications services to ensure full access, as well as the lifting of any restrictions on people's rights to information. **We call on** the military to be held accountable for all loss of life and suffering caused by these various internet restrictions.

Since they took power four years ago, the junta has proved itself to be one of the world's worst abusers of digital repressions. Based on the data collected by Myanmar digital rights groups, the military's internet shutdowns orders have impacted over 100 townships, representing almost a third of the country, including the areas most severely affected by the recent earthquake. In addition, the "firewall" system installed by the junta in 2024 continues to block access to all major social media, news sites and other public information sources, even restricting the use of VPNs. This forces people to search for open VPNs, even in this dire moment. Combined with power outages and damage to telecommunications infrastructure caused by the earthquake, people in Myanmar are facing unprecedented communications disruptions. Moreover, the various restrictions imposed on people's access to information since 2021, including revoking newspapers licenses, blocking many news websites, arresting and killing journalists, are now obstructing real-time information on the earthquake's impact, delaying rescue efforts and contributing to preventable deaths.

We condemn the military and its actions in the strongest possible terms, and demand the following from Military Chief Min Aung Hlaing and his forces:

1. **Restore internet access immediately across the country.** Cutting off connectivity in the wake of a humanitarian crisis is a deliberate act of harm. All remaining internet shutdowns must be lifted now.
2. **Lift all internet censorship measures**, including the “firewall” systems on internet gateways, which force people to rely on VPNs that slow down already limited bandwidth, disturbing rescue efforts where every second counts.
3. **End all restrictions on media and media freedom.** Immediately lift any restrictions on journalists and stop disrupting their work via measures such as threats and arrests.
4. **Stop all military oppression immediately and unconditionally**, including forced conscription, arbitrary arrests, executions, threats, and airstrikes. **These actions have hindered emergency relief efforts and caused the loss of more lives.**
5. **The military council must take full accountability for imposing internet shutdowns and restricting public access to information during the earthquake.** These actions not only disrupted the flow of critical information but also led to preventable deaths by hindering timely rescue efforts. The loss of lives and widespread suffering caused by these deliberate restrictions are solely the responsibility of the military council.

We call on the international community, governments, UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, and tech companies to

1. **Pressure the junta to lift any ongoing internet shutdowns and internet restrictions** so that people can seek urgent help and communicate with the outside world.
2. **Pressure the junta** to end restrictions on public access to information and media freedom as per international access to information and media protocols.
3. **Support emergency connectivity solutions to bypass internet shutdowns through local groups** and ensure that affected communities can communicate.
4. **Ensure** that emergency aid, including support with emergency communication, does not fall into military hands to be misused and abused as a tool for oppression.

Restore internet access now — before countless more people perish needlessly.

Signatories

A collective of Myanmar, regional, and international digital rights organizations

Contact:

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List of signatories:

1. 5/ of Zaya State Strike
2. A-Yar-Taw People Strike
3. Access Now
4. Activate Rights (Bangladesh)
5. All Aung Myay Thar San Schools Strike Force
6. Alliance of Students' Union – Yangon (ASU-Yangon)
7. Alternatives (Montreal)
8. Alternative Solutions for Rural Communities (ASORCOM)
9. Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon-AJAY
10. Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
11. Association Suisse-Birmanie
12. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
13. Ayeyarwady Youth Network
14. Basic Education Worker Unions – Steering Committee (BEWU-SC)
15. Burma Academy
16. Burma Podcast Network
17. CAN - Myanmar
18. CDM Medical Network (CDMMN)
19. Central European Institute of Asian Studies
20. Chaung Oo Township Youth Strike Committee
21. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
22. Civil Information Network (CIN)
23. Coalition for Democracy (C4D)
24. Coalition Strike Committee – Dawei
25. Dawei Youths Revolutionary Movement Strike Committee
26. Defend Myanmar Democracy-DMD
27. Depayin Township Revolution Steering Committee
28. DigiSec Lab
29. Digital Rights Collective
30. Doh Ayay
31. EngageMedia
32. Ethnic Youth General Strike Committee (Mandalay)
33. Exile Hub
34. Foundation for Media Alternatives
35. General Strike Collaboration Committee (GSCC)
36. General Strike Committee of Basic and Higher Education (GSCBHE)
37. Generation Wave
38. Global Voices
39. GMSR Korea 글로벌 미얀마 불혁명 연대 -တကမ္ဘာလုံးဆိုင်ရာ မြန်မာ့နွေဦးတော်လှန်ရေး
40. Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria
41. Info Birmanie

42. JCA-NET(Japan)
43. Kachin Student Union
44. Kalay Township Strike Force
45. Kanbalu Strike Committee
46. KengTung Youth Network
47. Korea University Law School International Human Rights Clinic
48. Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet
49. Kyain Seikgyi Spring Revolution Leading Committee
50. Kyauk Padaung Youth Network
51. Kyaukse Youth Network
52. Latpadaung Region Strike Committee
53. LGBT Alliance
54. Magway People's Revolution Committee
55. Mandalay Medical Family (MFM)
56. Mandalay Regional Youth Network
57. Mandalay Strike Force (MSF)
58. Mandalay-Based University Students' Unions (MDY_SUs)
59. Manushya Foundation
60. MayMyo Strike Force
61. Monywa People's Strike Steering Committee
62. Monywa-Amyint Road Strike Leading Committee
63. Myanmar Internet Project
64. Myanmar Labor Alliance (MLA)
65. Myanmar Studies Center at Palacky University
66. Myanmar Tourism Committee
67. Myaung Youth Network
68. Myingyan Civilian Movement Committee
69. Narrative Power
70. National Youth Congress (NYC)
71. New Rehmonnya Federated Force
72. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
73. Nyaung Oo Youth Network
74. Nyimuyar Initiative
75. OCTOPUS (Youth Organization)
76. Open Net (Korea)
77. Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI)
78. Pale Township People's Strike Steering Committee
79. PEN America
80. Pollicy
81. Public Virtue Research Institute
82. Purple Window Counselling
83. Pyi Gyi Tagon Strike Force
84. Red en Defensa de los Derechos Digitales (R3D)
85. Shwe Pan Kone People's Strike Steering Committee

86. South East Asia Collaborative Policy Network (SEA CPN)
87. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)
88. Southern Monitor
89. Spring Revolution Security
90. Spring Sprouts
91. Spring University Myanmar
92. Ta'ang Women's Organization _TWO
93. Tanintharyi Youth Network (TYN)
94. Taze Strike Committee
95. The Red Flag
96. U.S. Campaign for Burma
97. University of Medicine Mandalay Students' Union Revolution Front (UMMSURF)
98. University Students' Unions Alumni Force
99. Wetlet Revolution Leading Committee
100. White Coat Society Yangon (WCSY)
101. WHAT TO FIX
102. Women Alliance Burma (WAB)
103. Yadanabon University Students' Union (YDNBUSU)
104. Yasakyo Township People`s Strike Steering Committee
105. Viet Tan
106. Yinmarpin and Salingyi All Villages Strike Committee
107. Youth Development Institute (YDI)
108. 1 Undisclosed organization (due to security concern)
109. Women Of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)
110. Miaan Group
111. Tech Global Institute
112. Kurdistan without Genocide
113. Organization of the Justice Campaign
114. Life campaign to abolish the death sentence in Kurdistan
115. TEDIC, Paraguay
116. Afia-Amani Grands-Lacs
117. Association Suisse-Birmanie
118. FORUMVERT
119. May First Movement Technology
120. Centre for Independent Journalism (Malaysia)