



## JOINT STATEMENT

### Civil Society Condemns Philippine Diplomatic Engagement with Myanmar's Military Junta

January 14, 2026

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from Myanmar and the Philippines, express our deep concern and dismay at the recent visit of Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro to Nay Pyi Taw on January 6, 2026, and her engagement with Myanmar's illegal military junta and its leader, Min Aung Hlaing.

This engagement confers false legitimacy on a military junta—rebranded as the so-called *State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC)*—that has no democratic mandate and remains responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and systematic repression since the February 2021 coup. Treating the junta as Myanmar's "central government," whether its leaders appear in military uniforms or disguised as civilian ministers or parliamentarians following a staged electoral farce, rewards mass atrocities and normalizes criminal rule.

#### **This visit raises grave concerns:**

- **Normalizing a Fabricated Political Order Outside the ASEAN Mandate:** By engaging the junta as a governing authority and entertaining its staged three-phase "election" plan, the Philippines risks institutionalizing a dangerous and illegitimate pattern: the military junta in Nay Pyi Taw is treated as a state actor, while Myanmar's genuinely representative democratic forces—including the National Unity Government (NUG), ethnic revolutionary organizations, and civil society—are reduced to non-state actors to be merely "facilitated" into dialogue with an imposed, junta-controlled structure.

This approach is **not authorized by ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus (5PC)**. It constitutes interference in Myanmar's political legitimacy, takes sides in an unresolved conflict, bestows undeserved recognition on a criminal and war-making actor, and simultaneously undermines the legitimacy of stakeholders who genuinely represent the will of the Myanmar people.

- **Legitimizing a Sham Election in Direct Violation of ASEAN Decisions:** Referring to the junta's election plans as a subject of "warm and constructive" dialogue contradicts ASEAN's own agreed position. The October 2025 ASEAN Leaders' Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus clearly states: "*We emphasise that the cessation of violence and inclusive political dialogue must precede elections.*"

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In Myanmar today, violence has not ceased; it has intensified. Millions are displaced, aerial bombardments continue, legitimate political leaders are imprisoned, and over 40 genuine political parties have been dissolved or excluded. Any election conducted under these conditions is inherently fraudulent and cannot be recognized as free, fair, or credible. Endorsing or engaging such a process undermines ASEAN's coherence, continuity, and credibility.

- **Undermining ASEAN Centrality and Collective Leadership:** As ASEAN Chair in 2026, the Philippines bears a special responsibility to uphold ASEAN centrality and act strictly within collectively agreed frameworks. Bilateral political engagement with the junta outside the 5PC weakens ASEAN unity, erodes the authority of ASEAN decisions, and sets a precedent that individual member states may unilaterally redefine regional commitments. At a time of intensifying geopolitical competition, safeguarding ASEAN centrality also requires resisting—not enabling—external interference. Normalizing Myanmar's junta, a regime now deeply dependent on China and Russia, risks further weakening ASEAN's collective autonomy.

- **Excluding Legitimate Democratic Stakeholders:** Prioritizing high-level engagement with the perpetrators of mass violence, while failing to meaningfully engage Myanmar's legitimate democratic representatives—including the NUG, ethnic nationalities, and civil society—disregards the overwhelming majority of Myanmar's population, which has consistently rejected military rule and resisted it at immense cost for nearly five years.

- **Enabling Transnational Cybercrime and Human Trafficking:** Engagement with Min Aung Hlaing rewards a regime that presides over, protects, and profits from transnational criminal networks. Under the junta's rule, cyber-scam hubs have proliferated across Myanmar, trapping thousands—including Filipino citizens—into forced criminality, human trafficking, physical abuse, and large-scale fraud. While the junta stages highly publicized handovers of trafficking victims and selective raids for photo opportunities, its allied militias continue to open new scam centers elsewhere in Myanmar, often in coordination with transnational criminal groups. The junta must be recognized as a central enabler of these crimes—not as a credible partner in addressing them.

- **Encouraging Further Escalation of Violence:** Accepting or normalizing fabricated election outcomes will not de-escalate Myanmar's conflict; it will intensify it. For junta hardliners, elections are not a step toward compromise but a tool to secure legitimacy, resources, and time to escalate military campaigns. Recognition of such processes emboldens a strategy aimed at total military domination rather than peace.

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• **Endangering Philippine and ASEAN Strategic and Security Interests:** Treating the junta as Myanmar's legitimate government also endangers the Philippines' national interests and broader ASEAN security. The current junta is deeply dependent on China and Russia for military, political, and economic survival. A regime so constrained cannot be trusted to act in Myanmar's national interest, let alone ASEAN's collective interest—including regional stability and security dynamics affecting the South China Sea.

**We therefore call on the Government of the Philippines to:**

- **Reaffirm its commitment to democracy** by ensuring that no high-level engagement grants political legitimacy or recognition to Myanmar's military junta in any form.
- **Publicly reject the results of the junta's sham election** and refuse to recognize any institutions or authorities formed through this fraudulent process.
- **Uphold ASEAN's agreed sequencing under the Five-Point Consensus**, affirming that violence reduction must come first, followed by inclusive political dialogue, and that genuinely free and fair elections can only occur later, in a secure environment with the full participation of all political actors and leaders.
- **Formally and consistently engage Myanmar's democratic forces**, including the National Unity Government, ethnic nationalities, and civil society, as the rightful stakeholders in shaping Myanmar's federal democratic future.
- **Affirm that the military junta is not the government of Myanmar**, whether operating as the SSPC or through generals masquerading as civilian officials or parliamentarians, and ensure that it is not permitted to represent Myanmar at ASEAN meetings or events.
- **Place accountability at the center of its ASEAN Chairship**, ensuring that regional stability is not pursued at the expense of justice, human rights, and the lives of the Myanmar people.

A coordinated, principled, and people-centered response is essential to prevent this dangerous diplomatic trajectory from becoming entrenched during the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship. We stand in unwavering solidarity with the people of Myanmar in their struggle for democracy, justice, and lasting peace.

**This joint statement is signed by 99 organizations, including 6 organizations that cannot be named for security reasons.**

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Signed:

1. Action Committee for Democracy Development (ACDD)
2. Ah Nah Podcast - conversations with Myanmar
3. Amazeyate
4. Arakan Youth Peace Network (AYPN)
5. ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
6. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP)
7. Association of Spring Rainbow (ASR)
8. Athan – Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
9. Aung San Su Kyi Park, Norway
10. Blood Money Campaign (BMC)
11. Burma Action Ireland
12. Burmese Atheists
13. Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
14. Chin Community in Norway
15. Creative Home (CH)
16. CRPH & NUG Supporters Ireland
17. CRPH Funding Ireland
18. CRPH Support Group, Norway
19. Defend Myanmar Democracy (DMD)
20. Democracy Youth Myanmar (DYM)
21. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization
22. Democratic Party for a New Society, Norway.
23. Doh Atu - Ensemble pour le Myanmar
24. Educational Initiatives Myanmar
25. Equality Myanmar (EQMM)
26. General Strike Coordination Body (GSCB)
27. Generation Wave (GW)
28. Generations' Solidarity Coalition of Nationalities (GSCN)
29. Greater Equitable Measures (GEM), Malaysia

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30. Human Rights Educators Network (HREN)
31. Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)
32. Human Rights Promoters (HRP)
33. India for Myanmar
34. India for Myanmar
35. ITALIA-BIRMANIA.INSIEME
36. Justice & Equality Focus (JEF)
37. K'cho Ethnic Association, Europe
38. Kachin Association Norway
39. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
40. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
41. Keng Tung Youth
42. Kyae Lak Myay
43. Kyauktada Strike Committee (KSC)
44. Loveurcontent Entertainment
45. Magway Region Human Rights Network(MHRN)
46. Matu Burma Foundation
47. Metta Campaign Mandalay
48. Mon Association - Norway
49. Mon State Development Center
50. Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia
51. Myanmar Baptist Churches in Norway
52. Myanmar Catholic Community In Norway
53. Myanmar Hindu Union - Norway
54. Myanmar Muslim Organization - Norway
55. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
56. MyaYar Knowledge Tree
57. Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma)
58. New Myanmar Foundation
59. New York City Burmese Community (NYCBC)
60. NLD Organization Committee (International) Norway

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61. NLD (OC) International - Japan
62. Norway Matu Community
63. Norway Rawang Community
64. Norway-Myanmar Democratic Forces
65. Olive organization
66. Owl Community
67. Peace and Social Justice Group
68. Platform of Politics (PoP)
69. Progressive Muslim Youth Association (PMYA)
70. Progressive Voice (PV)
71. Rohingya Community in Norway
72. Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network (RMCN)
73. Shan MATA
74. Sisters2Sisters
75. Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation
76. Southern Initiatives (SI)
77. Spring Friends
78. Ta'ang Women's Organization (TWO)
79. The Ladies Organization
80. Volunteers in Myanmar
81. Women Lead Resource Center
82. Yain Nweh Par (Rainbow Win The Storm - RIS)
83. Yangon 4 Brothers
84. Yangon Deaf Group
85. Youth Empowerment (YE)
86. Youth for democratization of Myanmar (UDM)
87. Zar Chi
88. Zomi Christian Fellowship of Norway
89. Zomi Community Norway
90. စမ်းချောင်းပင်မသပိတ်စစ်ကြောင်း
91. မဟာမိတ်တပ်ဦးကွန်ယက်

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92. လူထုသပိတ်

93. သမိုင်းသက်ဆောင်သူများ

94. သုခရပ်ဝန်း( သတင်းရုပ်သံ)

**This statement is organized by the People Movement Platform (Myanmar).**

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