

21 September, 2020

To: Member and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council

Subject: Open letter from Myanmar civil society organizations to the UN Human Rights Council on the deteriorating human rights situation in Myanmar during the COVID-19 crisis

Your Excellencies,

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, which falls on 21 September, we, 431 Myanmar civil society organizations express concern over the deteriorating human rights situation amid the pandemic, escalating armed conflict in ethnic areas, and the lack of humanitarian assistance, and would like the UN Human Rights Council to urge Myanmar to respect and protect the rights of all people in the country and to adhere to the demand for a global ceasefire by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Myanmar is one of the many countries in the world bitterly facing the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world seeks to respond to the catastrophe, Myanmar has increased its military offensives in Rakhine and Chin states, taking advantage of COVID-19. As the armed conflict intensifies, we are especially concerned that innocent civilians are facing atrocities and the scourge of war, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and extrajudicial killings.

On September 3 at around 9:30 pm the Myanmar military set fire to Hpa Yar Paung and Taung Pauk Villages in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State according to a news report by the Rakhine-based Development Media Group. According to All Arakan Students' & Youths' Congress (AASYC), nearly 190 houses have been set on fire in those two villages, and two villagers were killed on the same day. Furthermore, on September 8, we have learned sadly that a total of four villagers, including two innocent children, were killed and 11 others were injured when artillery shells fired by the Myanmar military hit Nyaungkan Village in Myebon Township. Again on September 17, in Shwe Long Tin Village, Rathedaung Township, a 43-year old man was killed and another two civilians got injured by the Myanmar military's artillery shell.

From 1 January 2019 to 10 September 2020, according to Burma Monitor, a local research and monitoring organization, 432 civilians were killed and 775 injured nationwide due to armed conflict and human rights violations committed during armed conflict. In Rakhine and Chin States alone, 295 civilians were killed and 674 were injured during the same duration.

To make matters worse, while people are facing hardship in the COVID-19 crisis, the civilians are not only suffering from the armed conflict, but also from information blackouts by the Myanmar government. It has been more than a year since the Myanmar government cut off internet access to northern Rakhine State and Paletwa Township in Chin State for security reasons, leaving people with serious challenges without access to information about COVID-19 and the war. Such actions by the Myanmar government not only violate the basic rights of the people, but also pave the way for the Myanmar military to perpetuate serious human rights abuses which could amount to war

crimes and crimes against humanity, while keeping the people of Myanmar and the international community in the dark.

In addition, the Myanmar government are using the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for the arbitrary arrest and detention of activists who are calling for an end to war and human rights abuses and an end to internet restriction. We are particularly concerned that these efforts are intended to shrink the democratic and civil society space through oppression and unjust measures.

On September 9, three students from Arakan Student's Union who protested in front of the Rakhine State government office to stop the war, were charged and arrested under the Natural Disaster Management Law and Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Then, on September 10, thirteen students of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), who staged a similar anti-war rally in Mandalay, were charged under Article 19 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Additionally, the authorities raided the house of Wai Yan Phyo Moe and Ko Paing Min Khant, members of the ABFSU, on September 12 in connection with an anti-war sticker campaign in Rangoon and they were also charged under Article 19 of Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. Such arrests on young peace-loving people who are calling for peace and to stop the war, make us understand that the Myanmar government is showing that they don't want genuine peace.

While the Myanmar government and military are using the COVID-19 pandemic as a weapon of war and as tool for political exploitation, since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, nearly 20,000 people have been charged by the government for breaking the Natural Disaster Management Law and for not following the rules during emergency crisis, according to Radio Free Asia's Myanmar program. As the current Myanmar government, who claims to be establishing democracy ignores the plight of the people, focused on the November 8 general elections, and continues to repress people's freedom of expression, our civil society groups are particularly concerned that the people will face even greater human rights abuses in the future.

While the world is facing the bitter crisis of COVID-19, by continuing attacks that target civilians, the Myanmar government is not only committing blatant war crimes and crimes against humanity, but also violating the Geneva Convention, which Myanmar is a signatory. Therefore, we, as civil society organizations from Myanmar urge the Human Rights Council to take the following steps to ensure justice by bringing the Myanmar military that commits war crimes and crimes against humanity to account.

- The Myanmar military must immediately end all hostility and offensive attacks in ethnic areas amid COVID-19 and the Myanmar government and military must adhere to the call for a global ceasefire made by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres;
- Authorities must stop the unjust suppression against democracy activists, peaceful demonstrators, and human rights defenders by releasing those who are in detention and dropping charges against them;
- The Myanmar government must respect the international obligations and responsibilities to which they have committed; and

- The UN Human Rights Council should take necessary action to bring justice and accountability for the victims of human rights abuses committed by the Myanmar military, which amount to international crimes, and urge the UN Security Council to refer the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

For more information, please contact:

- *Khin Ohmar, Progressive Voice (PV): info@progressive-voice.org*
- *Ko Ting Oo, All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC): aasyc.ghq@gmail.com*
- *Moon Nay Li, Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT): kwat.office@gmail.com*

Signed by 431 civil society organizations:

1. 88 Generation (Myeik)
2. 88 Generation Nyein/Pwint (Bago)
3. 88/ Nyein Pwint (Kawthoung)
4. 88/ Pwint Linn (Ayeyarwaddy)
5. 8888 သွေးသစ် (မိုးညှင်း)
6. Active Women Development Initiative (AWDI)
7. A Lin Eain Social Development Group
8. A Lin Pya Kyal
9. A Lin Tan
10. A lin Thi Tan
11. A Nar Gatt Thit Group
12. Ah Lin Yaung Pan Taing Developing Group
13. All Arakan Civil Society Organization Partner (AAC SOP)
14. All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC)
15. All Kachin Youth Union - AKYU
16. Action Committee for Democracy Development (ACDD)
17. Ahlin Tagar Rural Development Organization
18. Alin Thit Sar Development Group
19. Alinn Bhamaw Development Organization
20. Alinsaetamarn Library and Resource Center
21. Amnesty Arakan Team
22. Andin Mon Youth Group
23. Anin Region Environmental Conservation Group
24. Ann Township Pipeline Monitoring Group
25. Arakan CSO Network (ACN)
26. Arakan Human Educator Network (AHERN)
27. Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team
28. Arakan Peasant Union
29. Arr Marn Thit Social Development Organization
30. Ar Ra Kha Foundation
31. Arr Thit Yaung Chi

32. Association for Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP)
33. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
34. Ayeyawady West Development Organization (Minhla)
35. Ayeyawady West Development Organization (Ngaphae)
36. AYY Farmers Union
37. Ayyar Pyo May Women Development Organization
38. Ba Ann Media Group
39. Basic Lawyer Network
40. Bawdi Youth (Ethnic Youth group)
41. Bawa Ahlinn
42. Bee House
43. Bu Thee Taung Youth Network
44. Burma Monitor (Research and Monitoring)
45. Citizen Action for Transparency (CAfT)
46. Candle Light Youth
47. CBT Gaw Ran Gyi Island (Nan Thar Pu)
48. Child Prevention Network
49. Child Protection Group
50. Child and Youth Organization (Shan)
51. Chin Community Based Rehabilitation
52. Chin Human Rights Organization
53. Chin Institute of Social Science
54. Chin Land Affairs Network
55. Chin State MATA Working Group
56. Chin Women Development Organization
57. Chin Youth Organization (Matupi)
58. Chin Youth Organization (Mindat)
59. Chin Youth Organization (Kanpalet)
60. Chindwin region natural resources watch group
61. Chinland Natural Resources Watch Group
62. Cho Chin Women Organization
63. Civil call
64. Community Association Development
65. Community Empowerment and Resilience Association (CERA)
66. Community Development Youth Network
67. Community Observer Association
68. Community Peace Support Group
69. COMREG Community Response Group
70. Cambridge Student Liberal Democrats (CSLD)
71. CSSDD (Pathein)
72. Da Nu Youth Group
73. Daily Educations
74. Dama Ahlin Social Development Organization
75. Dawei Development Association - DDA

76. Dawei Regions Farmer Union
77. Dawei Research Associations
78. Dawei Watch Foundation
79. Democratic Education Corner-DEC
80. Democratic Youth (Bago)
81. Diversity and Public Truth
82. Doe Chaung Doe Thaung
83. Doe Myae Civil Social Development Organization
84. Down Peace Foundation
85. Education (SPACE)
86. Educational Initiatives (EI)
87. Environmental Conservation Association
88. Environmental Justice Group
89. Equality Myanmar (EQMM)
90. Ethnic Equality
91. Ever Green CBO
92. Farmers Agricultural Network
93. Farmer and Land Union (Myeik)
94. Farmer Union (Bago)
95. Farmer and Agricultural Workers Group
96. Farmers And Land Rights Action Group
97. Farmers Union (Ayeyarwaddy)
98. Federation of National Farmer/ Peasant Union
99. Forest User Association
100. Former Political Prisoner Society (East Bago)
101. Free & Fair (youth) Network
102. Free and Justice
103. Free Education Service Organization
104. Freedom Society
105. Future Light Committee
106. Future Light for Child
107. Future Light Center
108. Future Light Social Development Organization
109. Future Star Youth Organization
110. Future Women Association (FWA)
111. Future Young Pioneer Organization
112. Gayunarshin Social Development Organization
113. Generation Wave (GW)
114. Generation Wonthoe
115. Global Family
116. Golden Future Social Development Organization
117. Golden Heart Organization
118. Green Development Network
119. Green for All (NTI)

120. Green Island (Tanintharyi)
121. Green Network (Tanintharyi)
122. Green Network Mergui Archipelago
123. Green Rights Organization (GRO)
124. Good Hope Foundation
125. Grip HandsKa
126. Harmony Youth Association
127. Helping Hand Organization
128. HinTha Da PIDP Group
129. Hinthar Tagon
130. Hkumzup Development Committee
131. Hna Lone Hla (AL)
132. Homalinn Youth Network
133. Hope For Children Development Organization
134. Hsar Ka Paw Group
135. Hsar Mu Htaw Group
136. Hsar Mu Waw Group
137. Htaw Me Par Group
138. Htee Gyaing Network
139. Htoi Gender and Development Foundation
140. Htoi San Local Development Organizaton
141. Htum Thit Sa Rural Development Organization
142. Htuu Region Development Group
143. Human Rights Defender and Promoters (Tanintharyi)
144. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
145. IFI Watch Myanmar
146. Justice Movement for Community - Innlay
147. Ka Nyunt Kwin Youth Center
148. Kachin Peace Network
149. Kachin Women Peace Network (KWPN)
150. Kachin Women's Union
151. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
152. Kan Chay Arr Man Fishery Development Organization
153. Kan Latt Myar
154. Kani Natural Resources Watchs
155. Kanpetlet Land Development Organization
156. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
157. Karen Human Rights Group
158. Karen Peace Support Network
159. Karen Student Network Group
160. Karen Women's Organization
161. Karen Youth Organization (KYO)
162. Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN)
163. Karenni Ever Green

164. Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG)
165. Karenni MATA
166. Karenni National Women Organization (KNWO)
167. Karenni National Youth Organization
168. Karenni State Farmer Union
169. Katan Development committee
170. Kaung Myat Hnalonethar Health Care Organization
171. Kawayaw National Youth Organization (KyNYO)
172. Kayan Earth Right Action Network
173. Kayan New Generation Youth
174. Kayan Women Organization
175. Kayin Culture and Literature Committee (Thaton)
176. KECO (Chin)
177. Keng Tung Youth
178. Khaing Myae Thitsar Development Committee
179. Khanti Youths Association
180. Khit A Lin Yaung
181. Kin Oo Natural Resources Watchs
182. Kin Ywar (Ma da yar youth)
183. Kindness Foundation (Karen)
184. Kindness Foundation (Shan)
185. KMSS (Pathein)
186. KOG (Karen)
187. Kachin State Women Network (KSWN)
188. Kyaik Hti Yo Mountain Range Lover Association
189. Kyaingtone Youth
190. Kyike Mayaw MATA
191. Kyonemaku Chaung Network
192. Kyaukpyu Rural Development Association
193. LAIN Technical Support Group
194. Lan Pya Kyal Sin Group
195. Land Activist Group
196. Land and Environmental (Shan State)
197. Lan Pya Kyal Sin Group
198. Lat Pa Daung Monitoring Group
199. LatButta Farmer Union
200. Lawngbit Hkawng
201. Lawyers Network
202. Legal Aid for Human Rights (Shan State)
203. LIAN Technical Support Group
204. Life Light
205. Light Civil Society Organization
206. Light House Ayeyarwaddy Network
207. Light Social Development Organization

208. Lin Lett Kyal Social Development Organization
209. Lisu Civil Society Network
210. Living Water Organization
211. Local Development Network (LDN)
212. Loka Ahlinn (Social Development Organization)
213. Loi Yang Bum Community Development
214. Lu Mu Htar Group
215. Ma Day Island Youth Development Association
216. Ma Naw Phyu
217. Marga
218. MATA Sagaing Region
219. Matupi Women Association
220. Mawduklarmae Social Development Association (MSDA)
221. May Doe Arrman Women Development Organization
222. Media Network (Ayeyarwaddy)
223. Mhine Nyein Network (Bago)
224. Mi Karen Youth
225. Minggalar Foundation
226. Mitta Blood Health Group
227. Mitta San Yae (Shan)
228. Mitta San Yae (Magway)
229. Mitta Shin Group
230. Mitta Yake Group
231. Mitta Yaung Sin Youth Group
232. Mohn Chaung Lover
233. Mon Area Community Development Organization (MACDO)
234. Mon Green Develop Group
235. Mon State CSO Network
236. Mon Youth Organization (zobbu)
237. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
238. Mon Social Development and Peace Network
239. Mon Region Social Development Network
240. Mong Pan Youth Association
241. MRDJO Magway Regional Rules of law and Justice group
242. Mu Se Multi Development Association
243. Mudidar Ziwadarna and Social Association
244. Muditar Organization
245. Mudon CSO Network
246. Mudon Township Development Group
247. Municipal Monitoring Group
248. Muu Basin Environmental Save Group
249. Mwetaung Area Development Group
250. Myanmar Digital Rescue (MDR)
251. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)

252. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
253. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
254. Myat Darna Group
255. Myaebon Youth Association
256. Myeik Lawyer Network
257. Myit Ma Ayeyarwaddy Development Organization
258. Na Phat Hla
259. Namkyeo Parahita Foundation
260. Nam Shani Organization
261. Nann Kyar Youth Association
262. Nant San Environmental Save Group
263. NeT Organization
264. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
265. Olive Organization
266. Open Development Foundation
267. Our Natural Land
268. Oway Education and Youth Institute
269. Paung Ku
270. Pae Kaing Shin Group
271. Pan Daing Shin
272. Pan Tain Shin Women Rural Development Organization
273. Pan Thi Kyo LGBT Organization
274. ParChan River Maintenance Committee
275. Pauk Khaung Youth Network
276. Pauk Taing Development Committee
277. Paung Sie Ayar
278. Paungsee Myittar Organization
279. Peace and Rule of Law Acceleration Network (PRLAN)
280. Peace, Development & Civic Engagement (P.D.CE)
281. Peace Working Committee (PWC)
282. Peace for Youth
283. Peasant Legal Aid Network (PLAN)
284. People Oriented and Development Group
285. People for People (PFP)
286. Phyu Sin Mitta
287. Phyu Sin Myittar Social Development Organization
288. Pone Yate Sit Regional Development Organization
289. Progressive Voice
290. Pwint Lin Voluntary Group
291. Pwint Lin Youth
292. Pwint Phyu Development Group
293. Pyar Taung Conservation Group
294. Pyay Division Mhine Peace Network
295. Pyi Thue A Kyoe Pyue Group

296. Pyo Khin Thit
297. Pyoe Organization
298. Parshan River Maintenance Committee
299. Rakha Arr Marn Group
300. Ra Kha Yin Thwe
301. Rakhine State Disabilities Organization
302. Rakhine Ethnic Congress
303. Rakhine National Network (Lay Taung)
304. Rakhine Social Network (Myaebon)
305. Rakhine State Civil Society Organizations Peace Committee
306. Rakha Strength Social Development Organization
307. Rakhine Women Network
308. Rakhaing Women's Union
309. Rakhine Youth New Generation Network
310. Rakhine Youth Generation
311. Ran Byae Township Development Group
312. Rural Development Organization
313. Real Voice Myeik
314. Reliable Organization
315. Resources Center (Chin)
316. Responsible Waste Collecting Group
317. Retired Voluntary Group
318. Rivers and Creeks Monitoring Group
319. Rule of Law Watch Group
320. Rural Social Development Organization
321. Sabae and Kyay Sin Mining Watch Group
322. Sarnar Kyi Phyu Social Development Organization
323. SarPhyu Farmer Network
324. Sanpya Social Development Group
325. Say Da Nar Mon Voluntary Group
326. Say Da Nar Shin
327. Saytana Shaesaung Youth Organization
328. Sein Lan (Mogoke)
329. Sein Lan (Tha Pake Kyin)
330. Sein Lan Lwin Pyin Group (Laputta)
331. Sein Lan Myay (Kyun Hla)
332. Sein Lann Mon Myay
333. Sein Yaung So (Katha)
334. Shan Literature
335. Shan MATA Working Group
336. Shan State Peace Taskforce
337. Shan Women Development Network
338. She Sawng Kyea Women Group (Karmai)
339. Shining Star Interfaith and human rights Group

340. Shwe Kyin Lover
341. Shwe Min Thar Foundation
342. Shwe Nathar Farmer Development Organization
343. Shwe Network
344. Shwe Paing Nyin Group
345. Shwe Pan Pyo Lat (Education, Women and Child Support)
346. Shwe Thinkha Social Development Organization
347. Shwechinthae Farmers Network
348. Sit Man Thaw Sanda Social group
349. SKY-Youth, Kyaukphyu
350. Social Development and Peace Network
351. Social Program Aid for Civic
352. Southern Youth Group
353. Southern Youth Development Organizations'
354. Star Way Organization
355. Student and Youth Congress of Burma - SYCB
356. Swam Su Ti Rural Development Organization
357. Ta'ang Women's Organization
358. Tampadipa
359. Tanintharyi Civil Society Group's Peace Committee
360. Tarkapaw Youth Group
361. TaungGoke Public Service Committee
362. Tedim Youth Fellowship
363. Tigyt Watch Group
364. Than Dwe Development Association
365. Than Lwin Thar Chin group
366. Thanlwin Network
367. The Seagull:Human Rights, Peace & Development
368. Thit Sar Yae Sin
369. Third Eye Organization (Mindat)
370. Thin Gan Taung Waterfall Group
371. Thazin - Legal Aid Group
372. Thurira Sanda group
373. Thwee CSO
374. Tonzang Fellowship
375. Tonzang Youth Association
376. Tonzang Youth Fellowship
377. Township Leading Group (Waingmaw)
378. Transparency and Accountability Network Kachin State
379. Tree Lover group
380. Thint Myat Lo Thu Myar (Peace Seekers and Multiculturalist Movement)
381. Uak Thon Local Social Development Organization
382. Union of Karenni State Youth
383. Universities of Kachin Literature And Culture Federation

- 384. Upper Chindwin Youth Network
- 385. Upper Myanmar Watch Group
- 386. Waingmaw CSO Network
- 387. Waingmaw Lisu Development Association
- 388. Wan Lark Development Foundation
- 389. Western Beach Ayeyarwaddy Environmental Conservation Group
- 390. White Hand Social Welfare Group
- 391. Windayea Village Social group
- 392. Women Development Group (Bago)
- 393. Women Development Group (Ayeyarwaddy)
- 394. Women Empowerment Group
- 395. Women for Women Foundation (WWF)
- 396. Wonthoe Youths
- 397. Worker Development Organization
- 398. World View Monitoring and helping Group
- 399. Yai Ywal Yar Youth Development Organization
- 400. Yae Aye Alliance Development Group
- 401. Yangon Youth Network
- 402. Yangon MATA
- 403. Yatanar Youngyi Social Development Organization
- 404. Yaung Chi Thit Public Library group
- 405. Yaung Zin Arr Man Group
- 406. Yaung Zin Hlaing
- 407. YoeMa Civil Society Group
- 408. Young Ni Oo Social Development Organization
- 409. Young Ni Oo Women Group
- 410. YOUNITY
- 411. Youth Arr Man Group
- 412. Youth For A New Society Amnesty Arakan Team
- 413. Youth For A New Society (YNS)
- 414. Youth Initiative for Human Rights
- 415. Youth Society Network
- 416. Zomi Youth Association
- 417. Zo Youth Organization
- 418. Zomi Students and Youth Organization
- 419. ကချင်စာပေနှင့်ယဉ်ကျေးမှုအဖွဲ့(တက္ကသိုလ်များ) အသင်းချုပ်
- 420. ငြိမ်းသံလွင်ဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း
- 421. စည်းလုံးရေးလူမှုအဖွဲ့အစည်းစကားပိုင်း
- 422. ဒို့တာဝန်နှင့်အရေးကွန်ရက်
- 423. မိတ္ထီလာခရိုင် အလင်းတန်းအဖွဲ့
- 424. မြစ်ဖျားရေး

- 425. မေမြို့ တောင်သူလယ်သမား ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးကွန်ရက်
- 426. ရွှေတောင်တိုက်နယ်တောင်သူ့အားမာန် ဝမ်းတွင်းမြို့နယ်
- 427. ရှမ်းပြည်ကချင်အမျိုးသားလုံးဆိုင်ရာကွန်ရက်
- 428. လေဖြတ်သူများကူညီစောင့်ရှောက်ရေးအသင်း မြန်မာ(SAM)
- 429. သန္တိသုခအခမဲ့လူမှုကူညီရေးအသင်း
- 430. ဆွေသဟာ လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
- 431. လောကပါလတရားမြှင့်တင်ရေးကွန်ရက်