

Who's Who in Myanmar's National Unity Government



By **THE IRRAWADDY** 16 April 2021

Myanmar's ousted lawmakers formed a parallel government on Friday in an attempt to defy and discredit the country's ruling military regime, restore civilian rule and establish a federal union.

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), established by ousted lawmakers in the wake of the military coup in February, said in a statement that it had formed a National Unity Government (NUG) based on the mandate bestowed on it by the people in the 2020 general election, which the National League for Democracy won by a landslide. Despite being outlawed by the regime, the CRPH enjoys popular support at home and abroad.

The new government is a coalition of democratic forces in Myanmar, including stakeholders from the country's ethnic groups, formed under the terms of the Federal Democracy Charter, which the CRPH made public in March. The charter guarantees the formation of a federal union, something the country's ethnicities have long sought.



Top row, left to right: Dr. Sa Sa, U Lwin Ko Latt, Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe. Bottom row, left to right: U Tin Tun Naing, Dr. Win Myat Aye, U Yee Mon

In the new government, Mahn Win Khaing Than, an ethnic Karen and former House Speaker under the NLD government, is the country's prime minister, while President U Win Myint and State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who were ousted by the coup and have been detained since February, retain their positions.

The vice president is lawyer Duwa Lashi La, president of the Kachin National Consultative Assembly, politically the most authoritative body in Kachin State.

For the time being the 15-member cabinet will be led by the vice president and prime minister. The CRPH has created three new ministries: the ministries of the Prime Minister; Federal Union Affairs; and Women, Youth and Children's Affairs. Six of the federal ministers are ethnic Kachin, Karen or Chin, while no representatives of other ethnic nationalities have yet been appointed. However, with important ministries like Agriculture, Transport, and Energy yet to be filled, they will likely be added soon.

In the NUG's cabinet, four elected NLD lawmakers—Daw Zin Mar Aung, U Lwin Ko Latt, U Yee Mon and U Tin Tun Naing—have been appointed as the ministers for foreign affairs; home affairs and immigration; defense; and planning, finance and investment, respectively. U Yee Mon is somewhat of a surprise appointment as defense minister and brings some unusual qualifications to the portfolio, being a poet.

Dr. Sa Sa, an ethnic Chin and the international envoy for the CRPH, has been appointed international cooperation minister. He will also serve as the NUG's spokesperson. Dr. Win Myat Aye, who served as social welfare, relief and resettlement minister under the NLD government until the coup, will serve as minister of humanitarian affairs and disaster management in the new government.

Another ethnic Chin minister in the new government is Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong. With a mandate from the Chin Consultative Assembly, a politically authoritative umbrella organization among Chin ethnic people, the vice chair of the Chin National Front (CNF), a Chin armed group that has been lobbying for autonomy and federalism in Chin State, is now federal union affairs minister.

Dr. Tu Hkawng, an ethnic Kachin with a postgraduate degree in social science and community development, is natural resources and environmental conservation minister in the NUG, while elected NLD lawmaker Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, an ethnic Karen, is the minister for women, youth and children's affairs.

Another new face in the cabinet is Dr. Zaw Wai Soe. The orthopedic surgeon, who earned renown for his COVID-19 containment strategies in Yangon before the coup, as well as for his involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement against the junta, has been named minister for both education and, unsurprisingly, health.

In his statement on the formation of the NUG, spokesperson Dr. Sa Sa said the government members will serve the people of Myanmar regardless of their race, religion, community of origin or walk of life.

"All will have a vitally important role to play in the great cause of liberating our nation from the scourge of this murderous military junta, and all will have equal rights as citizens of Myanmar," he said.

The spokesperson added that the NUG will bring all ethnic nationalities on board "so that it represents the great diversity and strength of this great nation of Myanmar."

The NUG also appointed 12 deputy ministers, six of whom are ethnic Kachin, Karen, Mon, Kayan, Karenni and Ta'ang. Many of them are young, politically active and well-educated.

The announcement of the NUG's formation was heartily welcomed by Myanmar's people on Friday.

On the CRPH's Facebook page, the announcement earned 149,000 shares within two hours.

One supporter simply said: “Our legitimate government and we support NUG!”

Unsurprisingly, most of the other comments expressed similar sentiments.

On Friday, the NUG’s Foreign Minister Daw Zin Mar Aung wrote in The [New York Times](#) that the people of Myanmar are ready to take great risks and pay a great price for their rights and freedom.

“We ask the international community to support them, with coordinated political, financial and security measures,” she said.

Topics: announce, cabinet, CRPH, Ethnic groups, Ethnicities, Federal Democracy Charter, federal union, National Unity Government, unveil, Who’s Who