

Myanmar risks state failure without significant increase in international pressure, The Elders warn

LONDON, 1 June 2021

The Elders today called on the international community to intensify pressure on the military leadership in Myanmar to prevent the country descending into endemic violence and state failure. The UN, ASEAN and other regional and international actors must urgently step up their level of engagement to prevent consolidation of the coup, and give their full backing to a return to democratic, civilian rule.

The Elders warned that the cost of inaction is high, as can be seen from other protracted conflicts worldwide and their humanitarian consequences. Although international media attention on Myanmar is receding, state violence, repression and coercion continue to be systematically deployed against civilians who stand up against the coup.

More than 800 people have been killed by security forces since 1 February, and violence is escalating in many parts of the country. The impact of the crisis on health, education and other basic services has been devastating, and the economy is on the verge of collapse. Teachers who have been striking as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement have reportedly faced suspensions and threats by the military ahead of today's deadline for public schools to reopen, risking further tensions and violence.

[Mary Robinson](#), Chair of The Elders and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

"Myanmar is currently on a dangerous path towards state failure. The international community must stand firm in opposition to the military coup. Allowing the coup to succeed through inaction and disregard would further undermine the international rules-based order upon which global stability depends. Regional states and international organisations, notably the UN, should use all the tools at their disposal to convince the military of the urgent need for constructive dialogue between all relevant parties, as the only way out of the crisis."

The Elders noted that divisions within the UN Security Council continue to impede concerted action, and they urged its Permanent Members to enable the Council to fulfil its obligation under the United Nations Charter to maintain global peace and security.

Within the region, more than a month has passed since the ASEAN summit in Jakarta on 24 April, without visible progress on implementation of the commitments in the five-point plan. ASEAN must hold Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the coup leader, accountable for his adherence to the commitments agreed in Jakarta, without preconditions.

[Ban Ki-moon](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former UN Secretary-General, said:

“Unfortunately, ASEAN is failing to live up to its mandate and responsibilities. It must now step up and play the crucial role expected of it by countries around the world in the resolution of this crisis. A visit by a high-level ASEAN delegation, to initiate dialogue with all parties, is long overdue. Myanmar’s regional neighbours have the levers in their hands to change the trajectory of this crisis. Now is the time to use them.”

The Elders warned that the State Administrative Council established following the coup does not have the legitimacy or authority to govern Myanmar. The threat by the military-appointed Union Election Commission to dissolve the National League for Democracy, which won an overwhelming majority in elections last November, only diminishes the junta’s legitimacy even further and exposes their fear of Myanmar’s people.

The Elders reaffirmed their solidarity with the people of Myanmar, including those living outside its borders, in their quest for a better future based on democratic freedom, inclusion and prosperity.

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[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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