



**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government
Ministry of Human Rights**



Freedom from Fear – Democracy in Myanmar

“Human rights and international law: the duty of commitment”

16 November 2021

It is an honour to join you today as the National Unity Government's (NUG) **Minister of Human Rights**. It is a great pleasure to be with you in Parma and I join my colleagues in thanking you for the invitation.

The Myanmar people have shown tremendous courage in opposing the military junta through civil disobedience and organised resistance. Tragically, this has come at the cost of lives and freedoms. Your support continues to give us strength.

Human rights situation in Myanmar

Myanmar is facing a human rights catastrophe. Since the military junta launched its failed coup d'état on 1 February, it has committed some of the worst crimes against the Myanmar people.

At 13 November 2021:

- at least **1260 civilians had been killed**, many of them children
- at least **7251 people were in detention**, with reports of deaths in custody, torture and mistreatment, sexual violence, and the denial of medical treatment

- and a total of **65 people** – including **2 children** – had received death sentences.
- **Arrest warrants** had been issued for another **1954 people**.

Furthermore, over the past 10 months:

Children have been taken hostage with their family members, tortured, and killed in the street.

Villages In Chin State, Karenni State, Sagaining Division, Magwe Division and Tenessarim Divisions have been targeted with air strikes and artillery, and set ablaze.

Entire communities have been displaced, resulting in new waves of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), some driven into neighbouring countries.

And COVID-19 has been weaponised by the junta, with medical treatment and COVID-19 vaccines withheld in an attempt to gain military advantage.

Furthermore, these crimes have been accompanied by the military's infamous **"four cuts strategy"**, which has cut off communities and presumed insurgents from funding, food, intelligence and recruits, including through internet blackouts.

This has raised a genocide alarm in **Chin State and Kareni State**, and there is limited time for the international community to act. Left unchecked, we could see atrocities on an unprecedented scale in modern Myanmar. A determined international response is required.

This is a perfect storm of violations. And, significantly, these acts **comprise crimes against humanity** because:

- **They are widespread and systematic**
- **They have been directed against civilians**

- And they have been conducted with the knowledge and at the orders of the junta leadership.

And, as we meet here today, there is every indication that these atrocities will escalate. The **Special Rapporteur on Myanmar** has also warned that the military's tactics in the country's north and northwest are "ominously reminiscent" of those it used before its genocidal attacks against the Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017.

Crimes against humanity

In September 2021, the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** held the military responsible for a 'human rights catastrophe' that included **widespread and systematic violations** of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Also in September, the Head of the **Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM)** told the UN's Human Rights Council that analysis of collected materials showed that the military's crimes were 'widespread and systematic in nature'.

More recently, the **UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar** confirmed to the UN General Assembly that the Myanmar military had engaged in probable crimes against humanity and war crimes.

1. Actions taken by the NUG

The NUG has taken a series of steps to bring these crimes to the world's attention and to pursue accountability. For instance:

- (a) The NUG continues to **report on the human rights situation** through public reports, statements, and by engaging with UN fora and experts, including the **Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the**

Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, the IIMM, and the UN's Human Rights Office

- (b) The NUG has submitted an **Article 12(3) Declaration to the International Criminal Court (ICC)**. This Declaration accepts the ICC's jurisdiction over international crimes committed in Myanmar since 1 July 2002
- (c) The NUG is cooperating with the **International Court of Justice** in *The Gambia vs. Myanmar* hearing on the Genocide Convention
- (d) And the NUG has developed a **Code of Conduct** to ensure that all defensive actions respect international norms.

2. Recommendations

Despite the scale and nature of the military's atrocities and their clear threat to international and regional peace and security, an international response has been tragically lacking.

There are **three immediate steps** that **Italy**, as part of the international community, can take in support of the Myanmar people:

(1) NUG recognition

The first step, also raised by the **Minister of Health and Education**, is NUG recognition. This recognition is a critical step to stopping the atrocities, to protecting civilians, and to holding perpetrators to account. Here, following efforts by the EU Parliament, the French Senate and the US Congress, the **Italian Parliament could recognise the NUG as the official Government of Myanmar**, and pressure the Italian Government to do the same.

The General Assembly's **Credentials Committee** is currently considering Myanmar's representation. Italy also has a vital role to play at the General Assembly and in other UN fora.

(2) Accountability

The NUG continues to urge the Security Council to **adopt a resolution** that targets impunity, supports accountability efforts, and starves the junta of cash and arms. The Italian Government could publicly and politically support these efforts.

(3) Humanitarian response

As the **Minister of Health and Education** outlined, humanitarian assistance – including medicines and vaccines – is urgently needed.

Conclusion

As a final point, the Italian public and media also have incredibly important roles to play through awareness raising, keeping attention on the situation in Myanmar, and through encouraging their political representatives to act in support of the Myanmar people.

I thank you again for your solidarity and support.