

Forum:	Security Council (SC)
Issue:	The situation in Myanmar
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Positions:	President, Deputy President

Introduction

The situation in Myanmar is a concern for international peace. Since the military overthrew the democratically elected government on 1 February 2021^{5,28}, the country has had unending violence, political separation, and a worsening humanitarian crisis¹⁸. The power of the junta (ruling council of military officers) has created lots of unrest and has led to a fierce response from a range of opposing groups. This crisis impacts not only Myanmar itself but also neighbouring states and humanitarian groups working in the region.

The Security Council has repeatedly expressed alarm over reports of arbitrary detention, attacks on civilians, and restrictions to humanitarian needs^{20,21}. At the same time, divisions between the members of the council have complicated potential action¹².

Key Terms

Tatmadaw

The official name of Myanmar's armed forces, which led the 2021 coup²³ and has been the primary actor conducting military operations across various regions.

Coup d'état

The forcible removal of a government, in this case the military's seizure of power from the civilian-led administration on 1 February 2021⁵.

National Unity Government (NUG)

A parallel exile-based body formed by ousted elected representatives, activists and ethnic leaders claiming to represent democratic authority in opposition to the junta³¹.

Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)

An earlier grouping of elected lawmakers from the 2020 elections who rejected the coup and formed representative structures¹¹.

Rohingya

A predominantly Muslim minority group from Rakhine State that has been persecuted and displaced, notably in 2017 when hundreds of thousands fled to Bangladesh^{14,15}.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

People forced to flee their homes but who remain within Myanmar's borders. The number of IDPs has grown substantially since 2021²⁴.

Humanitarian Corridor

Agreed routes or pauses in fighting intended to allow civilians to move to safety and allow a safe delivery of supplies. These corridors have often been fragile or blocked.

Armed Ethnic Organizations (EAOs)

A group of militias and armed forces operating in border and highland regions, some of which have either engaged or re-engaged in armed conflict with the junta^{13,17}.

War crimes and Crimes Against Humanity

Serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law¹⁶. Multiple observers have documented acts by state and non-state parties that amount to such crimes, including extermination, enslavement, deportation, torture, rape, and more²⁷.

Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP):

The coordinated UN-led plan that outlines the assistance required inside Myanmar and requests international funding. It has repeatedly been underfunded relative to needs²².

Background

On 1 February 2021 the military detained civilian leaders and declared a state of emergency, effectively reversing Myanmar's shift to democracy^{5,8}. The coup led to protests and the creation of armed civil movements⁴. Many activists and lawmakers created alternative governance structures such as the NUG³¹ and CRPH¹¹ to oppose the junta.

Fighting since 2021 has moved beyond conflict zones to include central regions such as Sagaing and Magway, increasing the exposure of civilians to violence¹⁰. The Tatmadaw has used airstrikes, artillery, and raids against towns and villages²⁴. Opposition forces, including newly formed People's Defence Forces and EAOs, have pushed back in some areas, turning the conflict bilateral and hence unpredictable. Human rights groups have documented cases of unjustified killings, torture, and attacks on civilians¹⁴.

Rohingya Ethnic Crises

Myanmar's crisis is worsened by the existing long term ethnic crises. The Rohingya displacement crisis of 2017 sent nearly 1 million people into Bangladesh²⁶ and these refugee flows are unaccounted for³³. Other ethnic minorities are met with marginalisation¹⁴.

Humanitarian Situation

Millions of citizens in Myanmar urgently need food, shelter, medical care and protection, while international funding has fallen short, with only about a third of requested funds gathered²². Restrictions placed by the junta have further complicated relief strategies.

International Responses

Neighbouring states face refugee and security pressure, but since implementation of solutions has been limited, the issue isn't likely to be resolved¹⁹. International bodies including the UN, have condemned abuses and imposed targeted sanctions²⁴. The Security Council, has found consensus difficult, resulting in limited action at the UN level^{12,20,21}.

Major Parties and Organisations Involved

Tatmadaw (Myanmar Military)

The central party that staged the coup²³ and has control over state institutions²⁹. The military conducts operations nationwide and is accused of widespread abuse by observers¹⁸.

National Unity Government (NUG) and CRPH

Opposition political bodies formed after the coup, which aim for foreign recognition and support for a return to civilian rule^{11,31}. They coordinate with armed and political groups¹³.

Peoples Defence Forces and Armed Ethnic Organisations

A host of groups including new civilian defence units to established ethnic armies¹³. Their capabilities and objectives differ, but many oppose the junta across the country¹⁷.

Rohingya and other Displaced Communities

Rohingya refugees mostly are in Bangladesh²⁶, while many internally displaced²⁴ persons are within Myanmar²⁵. The needs of these populations are acute and numerous.

Bangladesh

Has over a million Rohingya refugees²⁶ and faces continued humanitarian pressure.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has tried to mediate, introducing the Five-Point Consensus in 2021^{3,19}. However, its influence has been mixed since internal divisions have slowed potential action³. It is one of the few regional platforms engaging Myanmar^{1,19}.

United Nations

Through agencies like the Human Rights Council, the UN has documented abuses and delivered aid^{27,24}. However, its impact is reduced due to Myanmar's lack of cooperation.

Timeline

1948: Independence and Early Strife

Myanmar (formerly Burma) gained independence from British rule, immediately facing

internal conflict as numerous ethnic groups, including the Rohingya, Kachin, Shan, and Karen, demanded autonomy [Geopolitical Monitor](#).

1962: Military Coup

General Ne Win led a military coup, overthrowing the democratic government and beginning nearly 50 years of harsh military rule that suppressed dissent and ethnic minorities [Encyclopedia Britannica](#).

2011: Transition to Civilian Government

The military junta initiated political reforms, leading to the 2015 elections where Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD won a landslide victory, though the military retained significant power [Wikipedia](#).

2017: Rohingya Crisis

The military launched a violent crackdown on the Rohingya Muslims, resulting in widespread human rights abuses and the displacement of over 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh, a crisis the UN called genocide [Wikipedia](#).

2021: Military Coup

On February 1, the military, led by General Min Aung Hlaing, staged a coup, arresting Aung San Suu Kyi and other civilian leaders. The coup was met with mass pro-democracy protests and a violent military crackdown [Wikipedia](#).

2021-Present: Ongoing Conflict

Myanmar plunged into civil conflict as the military junta struggles to consolidate power against resistance from pro-democracy activists, ethnic armed groups, and the People's Defense Forces (PDF) militia, resulting in ongoing armed clashes and human rights abuses [Council on Foreign Relations](#).

Relevant Treaties

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948)

As a signatory, Myanmar is bound by this declaration. The military's actions, particularly during the Rohingya crisis, are widely condemned as severe violations of fundamental rights (e.g., right to life, freedom of movement) [UN Human Rights Office](#).

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)

Myanmar ratified the ICCPR in 1991. Violations, including arbitrary detentions, torture, and suppression of political freedoms, have been persistently alleged, especially following the 2021 coup [UN Human Rights Office](#).

The ASEAN Charter (2008)

As an ASEAN member, Myanmar is committed to respecting democracy and human rights. The military junta's actions have drawn criticism from other members, but decisive action is hindered by ASEAN's non-interference policy [Scholarly Commons](#).

Geneva Conventions (1949)

Myanmar ratified these conventions, which regulate the conduct of armed conflict and protect civilians. The military's violence against ethnic groups (like the Rohingya) and civilians post-2021 coup are seen as violations [UN Human Rights Office](#).

Previous Solutions

Democratic Transition (2011-2021)

The shift to a civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD was incomplete, as the military retained significant power over key sectors, ultimately paving the way for the 2021 coup [Journal of Democracy](#).

International Sanctions

The US and EU imposed sanctions on military leaders and entities following the Rohingya crisis and the 2021 coup. These have had limited impact, as Myanmar is insulated from international pressure and aligned with China [Human Rights Watch](#).

ASEAN's Role

ASEAN issued a Five-Point Consensus (April 2021) calling for a cessation of violence and dialogue. However, the junta has largely ignored these calls, and ASEAN's policy of non-interference hinders decisive action [aseanmp.org](#).

United Nations Involvement

UN efforts, including human rights investigations and reports of genocide, have been hampered by vetoes from Russia and China in the Security Council, preventing meaningful intervention [Human Rights Watch](#).

Possible Solutions

1. Strengthening International Sanctions and Diplomatic Pressure

Proposes expanding targeted sanctions on military leaders and businesses, alongside increasing diplomatic isolation through the UN and ASEAN, while supporting pro-democracy civil society. The challenge is Myanmar's historical resistance to external pressure due to its ties with China and Russia [Human Rights Watch](#).

2. Military Intervention and No-Fly Zones

Proposes drastic measures like a UN Security Council-mandated no-fly zone or the deployment of UN Peacekeeping Forces to protect civilians. This is highly unlikely due to the risk of escalation and vetoes from Russia and China [Human Rights Watch](#).

3. Inclusive Dialogue and Power-Sharing Agreement

Proposes facilitating peace talks between the junta, pro-democracy forces, and ethnic armed groups to create a power-sharing arrangement that includes greater autonomy for ethnic minorities. This is hindered by the deep mistrust between the factions and long-standing ethnic tensions [ResearchGate](#).

4. Strengthening Regional Engagement and Support (ASEAN)

Proposes ASEAN take a more active mediation role and build a regional coalition to apply pressure and provide support. The main challenge is ASEAN's strict tradition of non-interference in members' internal affairs [aseanmp.org](#).

Conclusion

The situation in Myanmar remains a complex and dire crisis, with no easy solutions. International efforts have so far failed to bring lasting peace or end the violence. While military action remains a controversial option, diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and efforts at inclusive dialogue may offer a more viable path forward. Ultimately, resolving the crisis in Myanmar will require a multifaceted approach that balances pressure on the military junta

with support for democratic forces and ethnic minorities, while addressing the underlying political, social, and ethnic tensions that have fueled the conflict for decades

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Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Myanmar and Ethnic Minority Regions source Al Jazeera

Myanmar: Major ethnic groups

Myanmar officially recognises 135 ethnic groups but Rohingya Muslims have been rendered stateless and stripped of their citizenship.

ETHNIC GROUPS

- Bamar
- Shan
- Karen
- Rakhine*
- Rohingya
- Kachin
- Chin
- Karenni
- Mon
- Wa
- Kokang Chinese

Ethnic minority states

* Includes other Rakhine Muslim minorities

- Rakhine-Rohingya inter-ethnic conflict
- Conflict area
- Capital

Source: Al Jazeera, agencies, freebumarangers, Burma - Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (Martin Smith)

