



## #MilkTeaAlliance Statement on a year since the attempted Coup in Myanmar

As of 20th Jan 2022, at least 2,164 people have been killed by the Junta and over 11,000 have been arbitrarily detained<sup>1</sup>. The violence has been escalating<sup>2</sup> against the peoples of Myanmar. Arbitrary detention, torture, rape, and murder have become commonplace. The Junta is implementing its 4 cuts strategy in many ethnic areas, using airstrikes against civilians, razing towns (such as Thantlang<sup>3</sup>) and villages and burning innocent civilians including aid workers<sup>4</sup>. Its crimes are numerous and well-documented. Some international lawyers and the IIMM have assessed<sup>5</sup> a number of its actions to be crimes against humanity, and violations of international humanitarian law.

Since 1 Feb 2021, an estimated 320,900 people have been displaced (this is on top of the 340,000 IDPs and over 1 million Rohingya refugees from previous conflicts)<sup>6</sup>. Humanitarian needs are increasing alongside the escalation in violence and displacement. The economy has tanked and health systems have been mismanaged amid the Covid-19, having a devastating impact on people.

Throughout the year, the peoples of Myanmar have stood in defiance to the takeover and violence against them. We continue to see protests, flash mobs, strikes and boycotts of Junta companies, and other civil disobedience actions all across Myanmar on a daily basis led by students, trade unions, LGBT+ groups and local strike committees. The armed resistance, made up of many established EAOs and joined by the new People's Defense Forces, is battling the Junta on a daily basis. Programs working on encouraging defections have made an impact on the military<sup>7</sup>. We see the work of CSOs, ethnic organizations and community & underground (CDM) clinics in providing aid, health care and support to many displaced and vulnerable communities despite the hugely challenging conditions.

Myanmar people in diaspora and their allies across the world have also carried out efforts to support the cause. There have been numerous protests & activities around the world<sup>8</sup> supporting the resistance on the ground.

This inspiring and creative resistance has meant the coup has not been successful.

It was briefly encouraging in June last year to see the United Nations General Assembly pass a resolution strongly condemning the February 1 coup. The General Assembly also made several important recommendations, including calling for all member-states to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar but the UN Security Council did not follow up and did not propose a legally binding resolution of its own.<sup>9</sup> Some steps have been taken by some countries and blocs (USA, Canada, UK and the EU) such as sanctions of members of the Junta and some sanctions against Junta businesses, in many cases in response to the tireless lobbying by diaspora and allies.

However much of the international community's response has been lackluster. Much of this can be put down to the expectation that ASEAN could lead an effective response to the crisis. We reiterate our disappointment in ASEAN, its 5 point

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.alSean.org/special-reports.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/myanmar-military-burn-villages-tatmadaw/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/save-children-staff-identified-among-dead-after-burnt-bodies-found-myanmar>

<sup>5</sup> <https://opiniojuris.org/2022/01/03/conflagration-in-myanmar-international-crimes-in-the-burning-of-thantlang>

<sup>6</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-update-no-14-17-january-2022>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20211210-i-couldn-t-kill-innocent-people-myanmar-soldiers-defect-to-join-resistance>

<sup>8</sup> <https://actionnetwork.org/groups/global-myanmar-spring-revolution>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-07/news-briefs/un-adopts-nonbinding-arms-embargo-myanmar>

consensus was underwhelming and the progress towards these objectives negligible. Indeed Hun Sen's visit to Myanmar and interactions with the Junta have reversed even the limited steps taken<sup>10</sup>.

### To our friends & allies in the resistance

We recognise that the situation on the ground is incredibly hard and that the challenges faced are still significant. The toll the resistance is taking physically, emotionally on our friends is obvious, but also their determination to succeed and create a better, fairer, more inclusive future remains undiminished. We will continue to support you in every way that we can. We will raise up your cries for justice, your calls for action, we will share your campaigns and advocate to governments alongside the diaspora, we will continue to provide material resources and emotional support as best we can. We know it is not enough but we hope it is something that aids you in your struggle.

We build our alliances and friendships on shared suffering and shared objectives. We will transcend the suffering and work together in solidarity. When we are beaten down, we help each other to get back on our feet and stand in solidarity. Your cause is our cause. We will win!

On this anniversary not only do we reiterate the calls we made in April<sup>11</sup> to the international community, international bodies, INGOs and other actors but also make clear that more action needs to be taken:

1. Sanctions need to be stepped up. The fact that MOGE is still unsanctioned a year after the coup is reprehensible as it accounts for a significant amount of the foreign currency income that the Junta receives. This money is used to purchase arms and technology to use against the peoples of Myanmar & keep the Junta in power. Both the US and EU need to take steps to cut this source of income<sup>12</sup>. Beyond that there are many calls for different sanctions from different parts of the resistance. The NUG policy on sanctions has drawn many of these together and should be implemented.<sup>13</sup>
2. We call on the world to recognise the National Unity Government NUG, CRPH & NUCC – (CRPH being the civilian representatives that have the electoral mandate from the Nov 2020 elections) – and to support them in working towards a genuine and inclusive federal democratic project, alongside all ethnic groups, EAOs, student & trade Unions & CSOs.
3. On the matter of humanitarian aid, with at least 3 million<sup>14</sup> people in need of humanitarian aid in Myanmar it is vital that international agencies ensure that their efforts reach those in need. We believe that part of the solution to this is ensuring that their programs work directly with local civil society organization, Ethnic groups and EAOs<sup>15</sup>. The Junta has blocked aid on many occasions and intercepted it for its own use.<sup>16</sup>
4. We call for more of the international community to support the struggle for justice by the Rohingya people, to support the ICJ genocide case brought by Gambia, the universal jurisdiction case in Argentina and the lawsuit against Facebook. We also believe that the Junta need to be held to account for their other crimes against humanity, both prior to the attempted coup against other ethnic groups and the ones committed subsequent to it.
5. To take actions to stop the Junta's capacity to use airstrikes and other attacks on civilians. Both a Global Arms Embargo against the Junta and military No Fly Zone policy have been requested by allies on the ground. The UN General Assembly has also earlier called for an arms embargo.

We the #MilkTeaAlliance Friends of Myanmar group along with the undersigned stand with the peoples of Myanmar against the Junta and will continue to do what we can to support the peoples of Myanmar in their struggle.

### Initial Signatories:

#MilkTeaAlliance (Friends of Myanmar)

<sup>10</sup><https://progressivevoicemyanmar.org/2022/01/04/joint-statement-by-the-civil-society-organizations-of-myanmar-and-cambodia-condemning-hun-sen-support-of-the-myanmar-military-junta/>

<sup>11</sup><https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdmzocqwOQ25lZN0P7w4L9H0nAn3-K8JkqrkacjWTVQ3c>

<sup>12</sup><https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/governments-of-the-united-states-and-france-stop-blocking-sanctions-on-myanmar-gas-revenues>

<sup>13</sup><https://twitter.com/NUGMyanmar/status/1458049821386944512>

<sup>14</sup><https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105202>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2021/7/28/theres-nothing-neutral-about-engaging-with-myanmars-military>

<sup>16</sup><https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/13/myanmar-junta-blocks-lifesaving-aid>

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- Free Myanmar Campaign USA/BACI
- ICR / No Business with Genocide / Campaign for a New Myanmar
- Chin Leaders of Tomorrow (CLT)
- Myanmar Advocacy Coalition
- Burmese American Millennials
- Nationalities Alliance of Burma USA
- Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy (GM4MD)
- Freedom for Burma - Karen Organization of America
- LA Rohingya Association/America Rohingya Justice Network
- Burma Task Force
- American Rohingya Advocacy/Arakan Institute for Peace and Development
- Support the Democracy Movement in Burma
- Burmese Democratic Forces
- Freedom, Justice, Equality for Myanmar
- Students for Free Burma
- United States Chin Coalition (UUSC)

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