



CHIN HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION

<https://www.chinhumanrights.org>

A Non-governmental Organization in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council

16 February 2021

The Honourable Scott Morrison
Prime Minister of Australia
Canberra, Australia

Dear Prime Minister Morrison,

Through the kind introduction by our very good mutual friend Senator Dean Smith, I had the privilege of meeting you at your office in Canberra in December 2018, as part of a delegation of Chin community leaders from different parts of Australia who came to speak to you to thank you in person and to talk about their situation there.

I now write to you with a deep sense of urgency and great expectation to draw your attention to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Burma/Myanmar following the military coup on 1 February 2021. The events following the coup de'tat have witnessed massive display of public opposition and bold civil defiance in the face of brute force of the Tatmadaw, which is notorious for their long history of gross human rights abuses against the peoples of Burma.

On the surface, the crises facing Burma/Myanmar now may seem like a mere power struggle or a contest of ideologies between democracy and dictatorship. Burma's still unfinished long road ahead towards democracy is to be understood with the structural injustices and grievances long suffered by ethnic and religious minorities in historical context. Sustainable peace, stability and democracy will only take firm root when there is a federal constitutional arrangement accommodative of and agreeable to all the ethnic states in Burma. It is for this reason that strengthening democratic and civic institutions and entrenching the ideals of civilian supremacy and the rule of law must be supported and promoted in parallel with addressing the aspirations of self-governance for the ethnic nationalities within a federal constitutional framework.

The ways in which the Burmese military has responded to peaceful protests, civil disobedience campaign and general strikes have been roundly condemned by the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the larger international community. We applaud the strong statement by the Australian Foreign Minister condemning the coup and calling for the release of high-profile leaders and detainees immediately following the coup. We are also highly encouraged that Australia, through its Embassy in Myanmar, has been among the key foreign diplomatic missions in Yangon at the forefront of sounding alarms and taking a firm stand on the side of all the peoples of Myanmar.

The people of Burma cannot afford another decade of living under a military dictatorship. This has been voiced loudly not just on the streets of Burma, but in capitals around the world, including in Australia. Last week, the United States took the initiative to impose tough unilateral sanctions against the coup leaders in Burma. We believe that Australia under your leadership can and should take similar measures to lead a coordinated, effective and decisive global response to the situation in Burma by:

- Introducing targeted economic sanctions aimed at crippling the economic infrastructures of the junta
- Rallying international public opinion on the invocation of the UN doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and
- Suspending and redirecting all existing Australian official bilateral aid programs towards supporting civil society organizations' efforts to strengthen democratic and human rights development in Burma.

Yours sincerely,

Salai Bawi Lian Mang
Executive Director
Chin Human Rights Organization