

Myanmar: Stop the Coup, Let Election Tribunals Do Their Job

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For immediate release

On 1 February, the armed forces of Myanmar (*Tatmadaw*), ostensibly acting on allegations of voter fraud in the general elections of 8 November 2020, detained numerous government officials, including State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, and Union Election Commission (UEC) Chair U Hla Thein, as well as pro-democracy activists and politicians from the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) and other parties.

The *Tatmadaw* subsequently announced that it would seize power, declare a one-year state of emergency, and install Vice-President and retired general U Myint Swe as acting president. It was also announced that new elections would be held after the state of emergency under a new election commission, which was later appointed on the night of 2 February.

The undersigned election or human rights monitoring organizations condemn the military coup in Myanmar and call for the immediate release of all detained politicians, government officials, and activists. The *Tatmadaw* must restore power to the civilian-led government, and seek redress of election-related complaints through the due process of law established under the 2008 Constitution.

Indeed, Myanmar's Constitution and election laws provide a mechanism to resolve disputes in the form of election tribunals. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which has repeatedly made claims of vote rigging and irregularities in the recent general elections, has like any other stakeholder the legal right to formally contest election results. It certainly has done so, filing 174 complaints out of the 287 received by the UEC.

Election observers were looking forward to seeing all election-related complaints and potential evidence presented and addressed in tribunal proceedings. According to our information, the UEC was about to proceed with the appointment of election tribunals when the military intervened. Election dispute resolution is an integral part of any electoral process, which rests on the fundamental premise that all sides act in good faith.

Therefore, the *Tatmadaw* must back down from its coup attempt and instead engage in a peaceful and transparent election dispute resolution process. The road to a fully realized democracy is long and arduous, but it is important that all stakeholders commit to upholding and protecting democratic norms. A repeat of what transpired after the 1990 general elections would mark a stark return to authoritarianism and will not be accepted by the people of Myanmar and the international community.

Signatories:

1. Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)
2. Association for Elections and Democracy (PERLUDEM), Indonesia
3. Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)
4. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
5. Cambodian Institute for Democracy (CID)
6. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
7. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Cambodia
8. Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV), Sri Lanka

9. Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Sri Lanka
10. Citizen Congress Watch (CCW), Taiwan
11. Civil Network OPORA, Ukraine
12. Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections (Bersih 2.0), Malaysia
13. Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community (CCFC)
14. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
15. East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN)
16. Elections Observation Group (ELOG), Kenya
17. ENGAGE, Malaysia
18. Free and Fair Election Forum (FEFA), Afghanistan
19. Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), Pakistan
20. General Election Observation Committee (GEOC)/Nepal Law Society
21. Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM)
22. Hong Kong Election Observation Project (HKEOP)
23. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA), Cambodia
24. Independent Election Monitoring Committee (KIPP), Indonesia
25. Jaringan Pendidikan Pemilih untuk Rakyat (JPPR), Indonesia
26. Legal Network for Truthful Elections (LENTE), Philippines
27. MARUAH (Working Group for ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, Singapore)
28. Movement for Free & Fair Elections (MDDE), Sri Lanka
29. National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), Philippines
30. National Election Observation Committee (NEOC), Nepal
31. National Election Watch Sierra Leone (NEWSL)
32. Neutral & Impartial Committee for Free & Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)
33. Open Forum for Democracy Foundation (P-NET), Thailand
34. People Center for Development and Peace (PDP-Center), Cambodia
35. People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), Sri Lanka
36. Pusat KOMAS, Malaysia
37. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
38. Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)
39. Tindak Malaysia
40. Transparency International Cambodia
41. Transparency Maldives
42. Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA)
43. We Watch, Thailand
44. West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON)
45. Women Caucus for Politics, Timor-Leste
46. Women for Social Progress (WSP), Mongolia
47. Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP), Cambodia