



Myanmar Situation Update (21-27 March 2022)

The ASEAN envoy to Myanmar completed his three-day visit in Myanmar failing to meet key political figures and groups including ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, election preparations have been put on hold citing the current political situation, and the US has determined that the Myanmar military committed genocide against Rohingya.

Here are key developments and updates in Myanmar that the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) has monitored from 21-27 March 2022:

ASEAN envoy visit to Myanmar

Cambodia's foreign minister Prak Sokhonn completed his three-day visit to Myanmar from 21-23 March 2022 as the ASEAN envoy to Myanmar with ASEAN secretary general Lim Jock Hoi, ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance executive director Lee Yam Ming and several other senior Cambodian government officials and staff from the ASEAN secretariat.

Prak Sokhonn met with the junta leader Aung Min Hlaing and the junta appointed foreign minister Wunna Maung Lwin. According to reports, Aung Min Hlaing told Prak Sokhonn that the implementation of the consensus must be “Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led”, which indicates that the junta is prepared to lead its own political roadmap as they have for over a year since the coup in February 2021. Prak Sokhonn also met with Ko Ko Gyi, a former leader of the 88 Generation Student group and the chair of People’s Party. The party presented the suggestions including freeing all political prisoners, protecting civilian casualties in conflict, humanitarian aid and assistance and meeting with all parties for a political agreement during the transition period¹.

In a statement, the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) urged to the ASEAN envoy to meet all the parties including the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), ethnic representations, civil society and the community

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/peoplepartyHQ/>

leaders in Myanmar. The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of NUG also said that it is unclear how meetings with junta representatives will lead to resolve the issues but the NUG nevertheless reaffirmed its cooperation with ASEAN². Aung Kyi Nyunt, a member of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the National League for Democracy (NLD), said the ASEAN special envoy's visit to Myanmar did not offer any breakthroughs in the country's ongoing crisis³.

Ahead of the envoy's visit, the Myanmar Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) said that the envoy's proposed meeting with them has been canceled as the envoy has no time to meet with the team. The media also reported that his planned meeting with the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) appeared to be canceled as there is no information on whether the meeting took place as scheduled. The junta refused the envoy's request to meet ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, saying it is not possible to meet her while her trial is ongoing⁴.

Election preps put on hold

The junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) has informed its sub commissions across the country to stop the preparations to hold an election due to the current political situation in the country, according to reports. Earlier, the UEC instructed the sub commission to prepare the voter lists to hold an election in the future⁵.

The Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD) said there is no change in the party's decision not to report the junta-appointed UEC's request even amid the threat of abolishing the party. According to the junta-appointed UEC member Khin Maung Oo, UEC has informed NLD and SNLD twice to report on party finances which they failed to present. The UEC said legal actions will be taken against the two parties as per the decision of the management committee meeting of the election commission members⁶.

US says Myanmar military committed genocide against Rohingya

At the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the US has determined that the military of Myanmar committed genocide and crimes against

² <https://twitter.com/ZinMarAungNUG/status/1505902881727295495?t=p9Y5l2fSzP0GRqcnHQVyDw&s=19>

³ <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/asean-envoys-myanmar-trip-unsuccessful-leading-nld-member-says>

⁴ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2283942/asean-envoy-says-urged-restraint-from-myanmar-military->

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/thanlwintimes9/posts/3684419251682564>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/thanlwintimes9/posts/3689855107805645>

humanity against Rohingya population in 2016 and 2017. He also announced nearly a million dollars in additional funding to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar⁷.

Other developments

On Myanmar Armed Forces day, the High Representative on behalf of the European Union and the Foreign Ministers from 21 countries, in a statement remembered the people killed and displaced by violence over the last year in Myanmar including people killed on Myanmar armed forces day alone one year ago in 2021 during the countrywide protests. Further, they also urged all parties to immediately stop the sale or transfer of arms, military equipment, material, dual-use equipment and technical assistance to Myanmar⁸. The United Kingdom also sanctioned two individuals and three companies responsible for supplying the Myanmar military with weapons and equipment⁹.

The Norwegian telecom company Telenor announced the completion of the sale of Telenor Myanmar to the Lebanese investment firm M1 and Shwe Byain Phyu, a local firm connected to the Myanmar military. It is also said the company has received USD 50 million at closing and the remaining USD 55 million shall be received over the next five years¹⁰. Rights groups and Myanmar civil society organizations have been advocating Telenor to hold the transaction claiming the transfer of Telenor will put the millions of Myanmar citizens' privacy at risk. Reports also say that the junta leader's daughter will have a stake in the company as Khin Thiri Thet Mon has invested in Shwe Byain Phyu that will have a controlling 80% stake of Telenor's operations¹¹.

A total of 20 Myanmar journalists have been convicted for incitement under the Myanmar penal code Section 505 (a) with the recent conviction of four journalists. Section 505 (a) criminalizes publishing or circulating "any statement, rumor or report, with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public."¹² Among the convicted journalists are Myanmar Thandawsint (Myanmar Herald) reporter Ye Yint Tun, Kamayut Media editor Hanthar Nyein and Mizzima editor Than Htike Aung¹³.

As of 25 March 2022, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded that 1,707 people have been killed by the junta since the coup. There are 9,930 people currently

⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/21/politics/blinken-myanmar-genocide-designation/index.html>

⁸ <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/03/joint-statement-on-armed-forces-day-in-myanmar.html>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-new-sanctions-against-myanmar-military-ahead-of-myanmar-armed-forces-day>

¹⁰ <https://www.telenor.com/media/newsroom/announcement/sale-of-telenor-myanmar-completed/index.page>

¹¹ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/junta-chiefs-daughter-acquires-slice-of-telenors-myanmar-operation>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/105546281608409/posts/334011525428549/>

¹³ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/journalists-sentenced-03232022164625.html>

under detention. There are 91 people who have been sentenced to death while 1,974 people are evading arrest warrants¹⁴.

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¹⁴ <https://aappb.org/?p=20773>