Asian Network for Free Elections

Myanmar Junta's Planned Elections:

Falling Short of Democratic Legitimacy

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) finds that the elections planned by Myanmar's military junta for December 2025 and January 2026 cannot be considered credible, legitimate, or democratic.

The junta's elections will take place in an environment of widespread violence, restrictive laws, and intense repression, and will feature dubious electronic voting machines, handpicked political parties, and no independent scrutiny from media or civil society, all in the hope that the international community will accept the results and restore relations with Myanmar.

ANFREL's assessment reviews the junta's upcoming elections according to established international standards and best practices for genuine democratic elections. These include fundamental rights such as freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of information, and freedom from fear, as well as election safety, integrity, transparency, inclusiveness, and the rule of law. They are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, the Bangkok Declaration of 1967, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration of 2012, the Model Commitments for Advancing Genuine and Credible Elections, and the Global Network for Securing Electoral Integrity's Principles for Democratic Electoral Reform Processes, among others.

Through fifteen concise sections discussing different aspects of the electoral process, ANFREL demonstrates that **the elections staged by the junta in Myanmar do not align with international standards.** Branded by many as "sham elections," they suffer from severe political and procedural shortcomings and cannot serve as a pathway to peace or resolution of Myanmar's conflicts.

The ruthless pursuit of international and domestic legitimacy means that **people are being killed and will continue to die because of the junta's elections.** More than a question of legality, these elections raise profound moral concerns given the ongoing suffering of the population.

The methodology for ANFREL's assessment included a review of election-related developments in Myanmar and dozens of interviews with civil society, media, pro-democracy institutions, and political parties, including several that will compete in the upcoming elections. ANFREL has been working in Myanmar for nearly two decades, and observed the 2015 and 2020 general elections, as well as the 2017 and 2018 by-elections.

Why does this election fail to meet the standards of credibility and legitimacy?

1. **The junta's elections are illegal and illegitimate**

   The military junta has neither constitutional nor democratic legitimacy to call elections. The mandate of the people remains with the lawmakers elected in the 2020 general election until genuine and transparent elections can be held.

2. **An election commission unlawfully installed**

   The junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) is not an independent or legitimate body, but an organ of the Myanmar military without a legal mandate to hold elections. Lawfully appointed election officials were illegally arrested and jailed after the coup.

3. **The military's claims of election fraud in 2020 remain unsubstantiated**

   It remains ANFREL's informed opinion that the results of the 2020 general election were, by and large, representative of the will of the people of Myanmar, and that the military used baseless claims of widespread fraud to circumvent due process of law.

4. **A repressive environment devoid of fundamental freedoms**

   The military junta has weaponized restrictive laws to crack down on dissent and curtail fundamental freedoms, in violation of its international obligations. These sweeping attacks on human rights undermine the very foundation of the electoral process, which cannot be considered free or fair in such a prohibitive environment. Credible elections cannot exist if fundamental political rights are not upheld.

5. **Rampant instability incompatible with elections**

   No genuine election can take place amid a backdrop of such widespread and egregious violence. It is essential that the military junta step down and hostilities stop across the country before any elections can be considered.

6. **Election phases will further ramp up conflict**

   Civilian populations will bear the cost as military operations, including airstrikes, will be deployed across the country to support elections held on a rolling basis. Each election phase will create more instability and insecurity and cause more casualties.

7. **No minimum coverage or voter turnout is required for the junta's elections**

   The junta does not need to organize widespread, inclusive, or even remotely representative elections for them to be considered valid under its legal framework. The elections staged by the junta will be held only in urban centers and areas under military control, excluding many voters and areas even within townships where elections have been announced.

8. **A new electoral system to ensure military hegemony in the next parliament**

   Despite claims of greater representation, the new electoral system introduced by the junta and its election commission favors large political parties, especially the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Together with the 25% of seats reserved for the Tatmadaw (armed forces of Myanmar), it ensures that the military and its proxies will be dominant in the next parliament.

9. **The junta's political party registration law: ensuring obedience**

   The junta's political party registration law places disproportionate barriers on freedom of association, enables collective punishment, and denies the right to appeal. It provides opportunities to weaponize the law against political dissidents at any time before or after an election.

10. **The junta's elections will feature only handpicked political parties**

    All registered political parties were extensively screened by the UEC and can be considered pro-military. They have been co-opted or propped up by the junta to create a façade of multi-party democracy and an illusion of choice in the upcoming elections.

11. **Voter lists are prepared from the junta's surveillance tools**

    The use of data collected by the junta to enforce conscription and impose surveillance over its population to prepare voter lists goes against international standards. It raises concerns that these lists could be used to exclude, intimidate, or monitor voters.

12. **Concerns exist over the military's control of advance voting processes**

    The integrity of advance voting under the military-appointed UEC and other relevant state agencies is questionable in the absence of procedural safeguards and independent scrutiny.

13. The junta's top-down adoption of electronic voting machines

Myanmar's election commission has forcibly introduced electronic voting machines (EVMs) without prior consultation of stakeholders and with little transparency around their procurement. While the machines are believed to have been sourced in whole or in part from India despite claims of domestic manufacture, the key concern lies in the lack of openness and clarity in the process.

14. Myanmar's electronic voting machines raise risks for electoral integrity

Myanmar's electronic voting system lacks transparency measures and independent oversight. In this context, there are serious risks that EVMs could be misused in ways that undermine electoral integrity and place voters under pressure, rather than serving as safeguards. The absence of a "no vote" option, combined with the criminalization of voter complaints, further restricts space for freedom of opinion and expression.

15. No credible election observers will be allowed in the junta's elections

No established domestic or international election observation group will participate in the junta's election. Countries supporting the junta will send representatives to legitimize the electoral process, but no independent scrutiny will be permitted by the UEC.