TO:
The Defence Ministers of
Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China,
India, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines,
Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam,

CC:
The Defence Ministers of
Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand,
United States

15 August 2023

Subject: Request to cancel or refuse to attend ADMM-Plus military training exercises involving the Myanmar military junta

Dear Defence Ministers,

We, the undersigned 551 Myanmar regional and international organisations and allies are writing this open letter to urge ASEAN Member State governments to:

1. cancel the upcoming ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus Experts’ Working Group on Counter Terrorism (ADMM-Plus EWG) training exercises under the co-chairmanship of the Myanmar military junta and Russia;
2. exclude Myanmar military junta members from all ADMM-Plus meetings and activities.

If the Myanmar military is not excluded from ADMM-Plus activities, we appeal to ASEAN Member State governments and Dialogue Partners to:

3. publicly refuse to attend all ADMM-Plus activities with the Myanmar military.

As you know, the ADMM-Plus EWG is currently being co-chaired by the Myanmar military junta and Russia, who are organising a field training exercise in Russia in September and have already held a tabletop exercise in Myanmar in August. The planned training exercise in Russia appears to include a simulation that involves trying to defeat ‘terrorists’ from a border area. This would provide direct support to the Myanmar military junta to improve its capacity to wage war against the people of Myanmar and its attempts to control them by force, while simultaneously also providing support to the Russian military to continue its atrocities against the people of Ukraine. This contradicts the ASEAN Charter, which states adherence to the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, democracy, respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The fact that ASEAN is providing military support to the Myanmar military junta while the junta is waging a campaign of terror against the people of Myanmar further damages the bloc’s credibility.

We underline the fact that the Myanmar military junta is not, by any definition, a government and therefore has no legitimacy to represent the people of Myanmar in ASEAN or ADMM-Plus meetings and activities. For decades, the Myanmar military has committed international crimes against democratic forces and civilians under the pretext of ‘counter terrorism’. Since the failed coup attempt, the junta has deceitfully and arbitrarily designated the democratically elected
National Unity Government (NUG), Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), and the People’s Defence Forces (PDFs) as “terrorists”. The junta itself, however, meets the criteria for a terrorist organization under both domestic and international law, and does not have any legitimacy to chair a counter terrorism platform or host counter terrorism exercises.

Over the past 30 months, the military junta has engaged in a campaign of extreme violence against the people of Myanmar. To date, the military has killed 3,897 people and imprisoned 19,740 more. The military has committed indiscriminate airstrikes, shelling, mass torture, sexual violence and other horrific acts of violence. Their war crimes and crimes against humanity have forced 1.6 million people to flee their homes since the attempted coup began. Thus, it must also be understood that the military junta is not a professional armed force under civilian control that defends the people of Myanmar from external threats.

The junta’s ability to gain and retain power depends on violence, coercion, access to funds, arms and other resources, and importantly, the complicity of international governments. Through ADMM and ADMM-Plus, ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners are falsely lending legitimacy to the junta’s ‘defence ministry’ and emboldening both the Myanmar junta and Russia to commit further international crimes with blanket impunity.

We welcome the decisions of Australia, New Zealand and the United States to not participate in the recent tabletop training in Myanmar or the upcoming training in Russia. We also note that Japan, Singapore and South Korea are not present in photographs of the training in Myanmar published by those involved. ADMM has also previously excluded the junta’s defence minister, Mya Tun Oo, from participation in ministerial meetings in November 2022. We call on all ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners to take responsibility in responding to the crisis in Myanmar by taking the actions described at the beginning of this letter.

On July 28, Defend Myanmar Democracy – a civil society campaign to defend Myanmar people’s right to democratic representation internationally – wrote to ASEAN and ADMM leaders urging them to cancel the counter-terrorism training sessions hosted by the military junta and Russia this year. To date, no response has been received and preparation for the training appears to be continuing. Consequently, we urge you, as the defence ministers of ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners, to exert your strong influence in support of Myanmar people’s human rights and fundamental safety.

This letter reiterates similar appeals from Myanmar civil society organisations and regional parliamentarians calling on ASEAN leaders to exclude Myanmar military junta representatives from ASEAN’s meetings at all levels and to take other actions to effectively address the Myanmar crisis, as well as calling on ASEAN Dialogue Partners to boycott ADMM-Plus defence meetings. This request also echoes the concerns raised recently by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mr Thomas Andrews, in his oral update to the UN Human Rights Council and in his statement on his mission to Indonesia. The Special Rapporteur recommends that ASEAN must not allow Myanmar military junta personnel to participate in any ASEAN meetings, especially defence-related ones. He also calls on ASEAN Member States to: “not attend if the invitations to the junta military personnel are not rescinded.”
We look forward to your positive response and hope to see ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners take immediate action.

Sincerely,
This letter is endorsed by 551 organisations representing Myanmar regional and international civil society, including the 298 organisations listed below and 253 organisations which have chosen not to disclose their names below.

List of organisations:

1. 5/ of Zaya State Strike
2. 8888 Generation (New Zealand)
3. Action Against Myanmar Military Coup (AAMMC)
4. Action Committee for Democracy Development
5. Action Committee of Basic Education Students (ACBES)
6. Ah Nah Podcast - Conversations with Myanmar
7. All Arakan Youth Organization
8. All Aung Myay Thar San Schools Strike Force
9. All Burma Democratic Face in New Zealand
10. All Burma Federation of Student Unions (Monywa District)
11. All Burma Indigenous Peoples' Alliance
12. All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF) - Australia Branch
13. All Young Burmese League (AYBL)
14. Alliance of Students' Union – Yangon (ASU-Yangon)
15. ALTSEAN-Burma
16. Anti-coup Forces Coordination Committee (ACFCC -Mandalay)
17. Anti-Junta Alliance Yangon-AJAY
18. Anti-Myanmar Military Dictatorship Network (Australia)
19. Arakan CSO Network
20. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)
21. ASEAN Regional Coalition to #StopDigitalDictatorship
22. Asia Democracy Network
23. Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC)
24. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
25. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
26. Association Suisse - Birmanie
27. Associazione per l'amicizia Italia Birmania "Giuseppe Malpeli"
28. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
29. Auckland Kachin Community NZ
30. Auckland Zomi Community
31. Aung San Suu Kyi Park Norway
32. Australian Karen Organisation (AKO)
33. Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services (AwazCDS)
34. AWDO (Nagphe)
35. A-Yar-Taw People Strike
36. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organisation. AWDO (Magway)
BAHAN Scout & News Channel
Basic Education Branch High School (Maharaungmyay) Students' Union
Basic Education General Strike Committee (BEGSC)
Basic Education Students & Youths Association (BESYA)
Basic Education Worker Unions - Steering Committee (BEWU-SC)
Bir Duino - Kyrgyzstan
Blood Money Campaign
Botahtaung Scout Channel
Burma Action Ireland
Burma Campaign UK
Burma Civil War Museum (BCM)
Burma Environmental Working Group
Burma Lawyer Council (BLC)
Burmese Community Development Collaboration (BCDC)
Burmese Community Group (Manawatu, NZ)
Burmese Community Support Group (BCSG)
Burmese Medical Association Australia (BMAA)
Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organisation New Zealand
Burmese Women’s Union
CDM Medical Network (CDMMN)
Central European Institute of Asian Studies
Chanmyatharzi Township People's Strike
Chaung Oo Township Youth Strike Committee
Chin Community in Norway
Chin Community of Auckland
Chindwin (West) Villages Women Strike
Citizen of Burma Award - New Zealand
Civil Information Network (CIN)
Civil Society Organizations Coordination Committee (Monywa)
Coalition Strike Committee – Dawei
Connect {コネクト}
Co-operative University Mandalay Students' Strike
Creative Home
CRPH Funding Ireland
CRPH Support Group
CRPH, NUG Support Team Germany- Deutschland
Dagon Seikkan News
Daung Sitthe Strike
Dawei (Ashaetaw) Women Strike
Dawei Youths in Japan
Dawei Youths Revolutionary Movement Strike Committee
Defence of Human Rights (Pakistan)
Democracy, Peace and Women’s Organization
Democratic Party for a New Society, Norway
Depayin Township Revolution Steering Committee
Depayin Women Strike
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<td>Federation of Workers’ Union of the Burmese Citizen in Japan (FWUBC)</td>
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<td>Former Political Prisoners and New Generation Group – Monywa</td>
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<td>Japan Myanmar Help Network - JMHN (comprising over 40 youth groups in Japan)</td>
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130 Karen Human Rights Group
131 Karen Peace Support Network
132 Karen Swedish Community (KSC)
133 Karen Women’s Organization
134 Karenni Association - Norway
135 Karenni Civil Society Network
136 Karenni National Women’s Organization
137 Karenni Society New Zealand
138 Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre
139 Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
140 K’cho Ethnic Association
141 Keng Tung Youth
142 Kyain Seikgyi Spring Revolution Leading Committee
143 Kyauktada Strike Committee
144 Latha/Lanmadaw Scout Channel
145 Latpadaung Region Strike Committee
146 LGBT Alliance
147 LGBT Alliance Myanmar (Kalay Region)
148 LGBT Alliance Myanmar (Kyaukse Region)
149 LGBT Community Yangon
150 LGBT Union – Mandalay
151 Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA), Bangladesh
152 MAGGA Initiative
153 Magway People's Revolution Committee
154 Maharaungmyay Township People's Strike
155 Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
156 Mandalar University Students' Strike
157 Mandalay Alliance Coalition Strike
158 Mandalay Medical Family (MFM)
159 Mandalay Strike Force (MSF)
160 Mandalay Women Strike
161 Mandalay Youth Strike
162 Mandalay-based People’s Strike
163 Mandalay-Based University Students’ Unions (MDY_SUs)
164 Manushya Foundation
165 Matu Chin Community - NSW/UPU Chin Association
166 MayMyo Strike Force
167 Metta Campaign
168 Min Hla farmers Group
169 Minbu farmers Group
170 Mindat Chin Community NSW
171 Mon National Council (MNC)
172 Mon Youth For Federal Democracy
173 Monywa LGBT Strike
174 Monywa People's Strike Steering Committee
Monywa Women Strike
Monywa-Amyint Road Strike Leading Committee
Monywa-Amyint Road Women Strike
Multi-Religions Strike
Muslim Youth Network
Mya Taung Strike
Myanmar Action Group Denmark
Myanmar Campaign Network
Myanmar Catholic Community in Norway
Myanmar Community Christchurch New Zealand
Myanmar Community Coffs Harbour (MCC)
Myanmar Community in Norway
Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
Myanmar Diaspora Group Finland
Myanmar Engineers - New Zealand
Myanmar Global Support Foundation (MGSF)
Myanmar Gonye (New Zealand)
Myanmar Hindu Community - Norway
Myanmar Institute of Information Technology Students' Strike
Myanmar Labor Alliance (MLA)
Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
Myanmar Refugee Policy Group (MRPG)
Myanmar Students' Union in New Zealand
Myanmar Teachers' Federation
Myaung Youth Network
Myingyan Civillian Movement Committee
National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), Pakistan
National League for Democracy (Monywa Township)
Nelson Myanmar Community New Zealand
Netherlands Myanmar Solidarity Platform
Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma)
Network of University Student Unions – Monywa
New Zealand Doctors for NUG
New Zealand Karen Association
New Zealand Zo Community Inc.
NLD Organization Committee (International) Norway
NLD Solidarity Association (NSW chapter)
Norway Falam Community
Norway Matu Community
Norway Rvwang Community
NRFF - New Rehmonnya Federated Force
NSW Karenni (Kayah) Communities
NUG and CRPH Supporters Ireland
Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
Overseas Mon Association. New Zealand
Padauk Finland-Myanmar Association
Pale Township People's Strike Steering Committee
PAZUNDAUNG Tsp [Scout & News]
People’s Hope Spring Revolution
People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD)
Perhimpunan Bantuan Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Indonesia (PBHI) / Indonesia
Legal Aid and Human Rights Association
Progressive Voice
Psychological Responsiveness NGO, Mongolia
Public Association “Dignity”
Pwintphyu Development Organisation
Pyi Gyi Tagon Strike Force
Representative Committee of University Teacher Associations (RC of UTAs)
Research Center (KIRDARC) Nepal
Rohingya Action Ireland
Rohingya Community in Norway
Rwang Community Association New Zealand
Samgha Sammaga-Mandalay
Sanchaung Scout Channel
Save and Care Organization for Women at Border Areas
Save Myanmar Fundraising Group (New Zealand)
Seinpann Strike
Shan Communities Network
Shan Community (New Zealand)
Shan MATA
Shizuyouth For Myanmar
Shwe Pan Kone People’s Strike Steering Committee
Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation
South Okkala Area Channel
Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)
Southern Dragon Myanmar
Southern Youth Development Organization
Spring Friends
Swedish Burma Committee
Sydney Friends For Myanmar Unity
Ta'ang Women's Organization
Tanintharyi MATA
Tanintharyi Nationalities Congress – TNC
Taze Strike Commitee
Taze Women Strike
Tenasserim Student Union’s Network -TSUN
TGK Bulletin Channel
Thakhin Kodaw Mhine Peace Network (Monywa)
Thayat Chaung Women Strike
The 88 Generation Peace and Open Society (Monywa)
The Korean Civil Society in Support of Democracy in Myanmar (106 CSOs)
Think Centre (Singapore)
This letter is addressed to the following Defence Ministers:

- His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar ‘Ali Saifuddien Sa’adul Khairi Waddien, Prime Minister / Minister of Defence / Minister of Finance and Economy / Minister of Foreign Affairs, Brunei Darussalam
- General Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Defence, Cambodia
- H.E. General Li Shangfu, State Councilor and Minister of National Defence, China
- H.E. Shri Rajnath Singh, Minister of Defence, Republic of India
- H.E. Hamada Yasukazu, Minister of Defence, Japan
- H.E. Gen. Chansamone Chanyalath, Minister of Defence, Laos
- The Hon. Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan, Minister of Defence, Malaysia
- Atty. Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr., The Honorable Secretary of National Defense, Philippines
- H.E. Lee Jong-sup, Minister of National Defense, Republic of Korea
- H.E. Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence, Singapore
- H.E. Gen. (Ret.) Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister / Minister of Defence, Thailand
- H.E. Gen. Phan Văn Giang, Minister of National Defence, Vietnam

Copies of this letter have also been sent to the following Defence Ministers:

- H.E. Lieutenant General (Ret.) Prabowo Subianto, Chairman of ADMM & ADMM-Plus / Minister of Defence, Indonesia
- The Hon. Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Australia
- Hon. Andrew Little, Minister of Defence, New Zealand
- Hon. Lloyd J. Austin III, Secretary of Defense, United States

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4 Assistance Association For Political Prisoners (Burma), *Daily briefing*, 7 August 2023, https://aappb.org/?p=25868
7 Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, ‘Counter-terrorism drills with the participation of ASEAN member countries and Dialogue Partners (ADMM plus) began in Myanmar’, 3 August 2023, https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12474571@egNews


