

## Written evidence from Myanmar Women Rights Activists Group UK (MYA0039)

### Executive Summary

The purpose of this submission is to draw attention to the atrocities and offences committed by the Myanmar State Administration Council ('SAC') forces (comprising the military and the police) against the civilian population and, in particular, the women of Myanmar. The military coup on 1 February 2021 and the crackdown of the protests have highlighted their cruelty, but it has been ongoing for decades. We have collated news reports and anecdotal evidence recounted by witnesses to show the extent of their inhumane actions and suggest ways in which the UK can play a role in bringing an end to the SAC's reign of terror.

### Who We Are

1. We are Myanmar women in the UK who want to stand up and speak out about the atrocious crimes committed by the SAC forces against the women detainees in Myanmar.
2. We have grave concerns over the detained women and so we have come together to speak up for our courageous sisters back in Myanmar.
3. Our aim is to bring focus on the plight of female detainees and the mistreatment of female citizens by the SAC forces.

### Background

4. There is substantial evidence<sup>1</sup> that reveal severe acts of violence, torture, sexual assaults and rape being perpetrated by SAC forces against the women in detention, on the streets and even in their own homes.
5. Women detained in interrogation centres, particularly those from marginalized religious and ethnic groups, are subjected to extreme torture and rape, which are intimidation techniques repeatedly used by SAC forces to forcibly obtain false confessions.
6. At least 47 women have been killed in the protests<sup>2</sup>, and around 800 women, including young women, LGBTQIA+ and civil disobedience activists have been arrested<sup>3</sup>. 60% of the people involved in the Civil Disobedient Movement ('CDM') are women<sup>4</sup>. Now they are facing violence, harassment, and threats from the SAC and many have been forcibly arrested by the SAC and charged with Section 505A of penal code.<sup>5</sup>

The following are some of the offences perpetrated by SAC forces that we have been able to collate:

7. This was the account of a young woman detained for protesting. In the interview she recalled the details of the sexual violence inflicted upon fellow Myanmar women in the prisons.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [How The Junta Terrorizes Women And Girls In Myanmar - YouTube](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Fatality-List-for-May-24-2021-English-Updated.pdf \(aappb.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Under-Detention-List\\_English-24-May-2021.pdf \(aappb.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Birth of C.D.M - C.D.M \(myanmar-cdm.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Penal\\_Code-articles.pdf \(burmalibrary.org\)](#)

- a. Young, female detainees were ordered to spread their legs and were kicked in the groin by SAC forces. Reports also describe sexual abuse (penetration) with police batons. One particular detainee was seen to suffer traumatic bleeding from this abuse and had significant difficulty walking;
  - b. Women and young girls were beaten repeatedly with metal rods to their heads and faces. The blunt force trauma left severe wounds on their gums and cheeks which prevented many from eating (chewing, swallowing, etc.);
  - c. SAC forces rode on women's shoulders and yanked their hair, in an attempt to violently subjugate them.
  - d. The SAC, notorious for its misogynistic culture, is particularly abusive to incarcerated individuals identifying as gender and sexual minorities. A well-respected trans woman protester was recently arrested, and reports have emerged of her being detained in a male ward of the infamous Insein Prison and subjected to undue humiliation due to her gender identity (e.g., being forced to strip and change into a male sarong).
8. Several women with active arrest warrants have received coercive threats ordering them to sexually submit to high-ranking officers in exchange for protection from gang rape in prison.<sup>7</sup>
  9. One high-profile female celebrity received lewd mobile text messages from a soldier saying he had masturbated to her pictures on Facebook, and that she will be raped "to [his] heart's content once she is caught".<sup>8</sup>
  10. An 11-year-old girl was shot dead by the SAC forces in front of her parents during a crackdown on demonstrators in MawLaMyine on 28 March 2021.<sup>9</sup>
  11. A 10-year-old girl was shot in the neck<sup>10</sup>, even in she was hiding, and now she is in a critical condition while her town is surrounded by Military.<sup>11</sup>
  12. A 17-year-old and her mother were arrested together on 14 April 2021 and she was released after facing brutal torture for six days but her mother still remains in detention. During the interrogation she was repeatedly assaulted and was threatened that she could be killed and made to disappear.<sup>12</sup>

### **Our Recommendations**

13. We urge the UK government to work together with the worldwide health and welfare organisations such as the Red Cross and UN Women to provide essential healthcare support for those who have been sexually and physically abused during the detention by the SAC forces.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/shwe-yamin-htet-04222021181201.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/ett89075034/status/1383820219836080133>

<sup>8</sup> <https://twitter.com/nslwin/status/1384183054982279170>

<sup>9</sup> [Child victims of Myanmar massacre: Funerals held for boy, 13, and girl, 11 | Daily Mail Online](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/asia/article-7811111/Child-victims-of-Myanmar-massacre-Funerals-held-for-boy-13-and-girl-11.html)

<sup>10</sup> <https://t.co/hPbyVIUdik>

<sup>11</sup> [Chin Human Rights Organization | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ChinHumanRightsOrganization/)

<sup>12</sup> [Myanmar teen tells how the junta treats women - Asia Times](https://www.asiatimes.com/2021/04/14/myanmar-teen-tells-how-the-junta-treats-women/)

- a. Setting up an investigation panel for violence against women and LGBTQ;
  - b. Establishing rehabilitation programs for the victims by providing shelters and organising trauma recovery programs;
  - c. Providing immediate access to financial and legal support for women Human Rights defenders; and
  - d. Demanding accountability to end the culture of impunity.
14. There is no doubt that when a State manifestly fails to meet the responsibility to protect its own people, it is the responsibility of the wider international community to take collective action in a decisive manner. This has to be accompanied by the threat of UN Peacekeeping forces landing on Myanmar soil. As a key and founding member of the United Nation, we would like to urge the UK government to lead the implementation of R2P<sup>13</sup> in Myanmar.
15. Strong words and condemnations on their own are ineffectual and achieve nothing. There has to be a tangible threat of military action by the West. Sanctions, by their very nature, will take decades to achieve anything and historical evidence has shown that sanctions alone have very little effect on the actions of the Myanmar military<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, the sanctions imposed in February have resulted in very little change. Sanctions at the very least need to be imposed universally.
16. China is aiding the SAC forces by supplying weapons and technical know-how such as blocking social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, while in UN sessions they veto any meaningful actions against the SAC. There have been several night-time flights between China and Yangon since the coup – a fact which was noticed very quickly by people living near the airport and the SAC attempted to explain it on their own State media with the unlikely claim that the flight was “bringing seafood”!<sup>15</sup>
17. The UK should use its political weight to prevent countries from supporting the SAC and put in place a global arms embargo. If total isolation can be achieved then there is hope.
18. The UK should work with other countries to officially recognise the democratically-elected government, the National Unity Government of Myanmar, as the true, legitimate government of the country. The UK should also offer financial and military aid as needed.
19. Atrocity crimes against humanity committed by the SAC forces have proceeded with impunity. When people are taken away at night and their bodies returned in the morning with evidences of brutal torture<sup>16</sup>, it is difficult to see a resolution to this crisis without bringing the perpetrators, the SAC leaders, and indeed the whole of the SAC forces, to justice in the same manner as the Nuremberg trials. Anything less would be an insult to whole generations of people in Myanmar who have suffered for over 60 years under military dictatorship.

### **Conclusion**

20. Without intervention from the international community and the UK in particular in its capacity as both a ASEAN Dialogue Partner and the UN Security Council Penholder for Myanmar, the country of Myanmar is liable to become a failed State and the level of

---

<sup>13</sup> The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/myanmar-burma/>

<sup>14</sup> [Public companies financially supporting the illegitimate Myanmar junta | Justice For Myanmar](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Something Fishy in Myanmar? — Radio Free Asia \(rfa.org\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Body of arrested Myanmar poet Khet Thi returned to family with organs missing | Myanmar | The Guardian](#)

physical, mental and financial insecurity for the women will become unbearable due to poverty, corruption and failure to uphold the rule of Law.

21. As one of the most powerful nations in the world, the UK government must take the lead by executing a broad array of bold actions to stand firmly against dictatorship and repression, and to demonstrate unequivocal support for democracy and human rights in Myanmar.

22. We, Myanmar Women Rights Activists Group firmly believe that the UK government will consider for implementation our recommendations to take tangible and positive actions. We are very grateful to the UK government for ongoing support on behalf of the Myanmar People.

Your Sincerely,

Myanmar Women Rights Activists Group

**24 May 2021**