

## Public Statement

6 January 2021

### **ASEAN: Regional-bloc under Cambodia Chairship must refrain from legitimising junta and enhance cooperation to address human rights situation in Myanmar**

We, the undersigned, express deep concern over the planned visit of Prime Minister Hun Sen, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to Myanmar to meet with the junta representative, General Min Aung Hlaing. The visit is scheduled for 7 January 2022. We call on the ASEAN to refrain from further actions that will legitimise the junta and effectively implement the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus in alignment with the call made by the international community.

Since the handover of the Chairship of ASEAN from Brunei Darussalam to Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen has stated his commitment to visit Myanmar to meet with Min Aung Hlaing and bring Myanmar back to attend ASEAN related meetings in the future. The gestures have been [condemned](#) widely by civil society organisations as they will set a precedent of legitimacy for the junta. Despite the explosion near the Cambodian Embassy in Myanmar on 31 December 2021, the visit is still scheduled for 6-8 January 2022.

ASEAN made a significant decision by not letting the junta representative sit in the ASEAN Summit in October 2021. Prime Minister Hun Sen's decision to visit Min Aung Hlaing, using the ASEAN Chair's role, is clearly in contravention with the regional bloc's commitment under the ASEAN Five Point Consensus. The [consensus](#) mandated the ASEAN Special Envoy to visit Myanmar, meet with all parties, and facilitate constructive dialogue. A visit from a Head of State of an ASEAN Member States, who happened to be the ASEAN Chair, to visit Min Aung Hlaing will be misinterpreted as ASEAN's attempt to legitimise the wrongful actions of the junta.

Cambodia as ASEAN Chair should operate in line with decisions taken by the regional bloc. It should not conduct any actions by itself that are in contravention with the consensus made by the other Member States. By choosing to go to Myanmar himself amidst [reservations](#) from the local and international civil societies, not only would Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia jeopardised the consensus made by ASEAN, but it also betrayed the aspiration of the people of Myanmar and the international community, who have continuously urged the regional bloc to refrain from legitimising the junta. It also ignores the grave violations suffered by activists and protesters including the 1435 people who have been [killed](#) by the brutality of the junta since the coup occurred on 1 February 2021.

Instead of undertaking this trip, Cambodia should put its efforts to improve its human rights record at the domestic level. CIVICUS Monitor has [documented](#) dozens of activists arrested in 2021 by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and accused of crimes such as 'conspiracy' and 'incitement'. In a most recent incident, union leaders and workers from the Labour Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld (LRSU) who have been undertaking a peaceful strike to demand their rights were met with violence by the authorities - some of them were [arrested](#) and charged with 'incitement'.

We call on Cambodia, as the current Chair of ASEAN, to halt further measures that will bring legitimacy to the junta military of Myanmar. We also call on the regional bloc to respect and meaningfully implement its consensus and to cooperate with the United Nations, other mechanisms, and the international community to meaningfully address the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. ASEAN and Cambodia's work in silos will only bring further harm to the people of Myanmar.

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**List of endorsement:**

1. *Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)*
2. *Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)*
3. *Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS)*
4. *CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation*
5. *Human Rights Working Group*
6. *Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet)*
7. *Kurawal Foundation*
8. *Indonesia Legal Aid and Human Rights Association (PBHI)*
9. *Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI)*
10. *Migrant CARE*
11. *SEA Junction*