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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Centre pour les Droits Civils et Politiques - Centre CCPR, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 May 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Myanmar: Human Rights and Humanitarian Crisis is only Worsening

In more than 3 years since the coup, nearly 5000 people have been killed, more than 2.8 million displaced and more than 18 million are in dire need of humanitarian aid in Myanmar. However, with the absence of decisive and coordinated actions from the international community, the military is continuing and intensifying its atrocity against the people of Myanmar, killing and arresting thousands of civilians in blatant violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Despite increasing brutality of the junta's violence and crackdown, people of Myanmar are continuing their resistance against the military rule. The situation of various fighting fronts of the armed conflict has been changing significantly. Although the junta and junta-affiliated militias are primary actors committing gruesome violence and grave violation of international laws, cases of such violations committed by other parties involved in the conflict are also reported and the human rights and humanitarian situation continue worsening in Myanmar, whereby civilians are suffering the most.

As it is losing several battlegrounds in different States and Regions, including their bases, territories and control of townships with border crossings and trade hubs, the military is heavily relying on indiscriminate attacks such as airstrikes targeting entire population including civilians as well as hospitals, schools and places of worship. Despite losses in several fronts, the Myanmar military still owns its firepower, including its air force carrying out indiscriminate air strikes, which it can continue with the supply of weapons, fuels and resources from outside the country.

Tens of thousands have been forcibly displaced by the intensifying and expanding fights between the military and various parties in different parts of the country. Furthermore, civilians are being deliberately targeted by the military in retaliation to the attacks and damages caused by resistance forces including through airstrikes and raids of nearby villages. It has so often been reported that, when the military was attacked or suffers a loss, it targets civilians and villages nearby as revenge. Innocent civilians are literally caught up and killed amid the escalating spiral of violence, whereby the Myanmar military, and in many cases also other parties engaging in the armed conflict, completely disregard and blatantly commit violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws.

Severe injuries and casualties among civilians are also caused by landmines, including those returning to the areas previously occupied by the military. In April 2024, UNICEF reported that the civilian casualties caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance tripled in 2023 as compared to 2022, from 390 to 1052, of which over 20 per cent of the victims were children. It further reported that "nearly all states and regions of the country, apart from the capital Naypyitaw, are now reported to have been contaminated by landmines", as "landmines are being used indiscriminately by all sides of an intensifying conflict."¹

While the junta continues deliberately blocking the delivery of humanitarian aid, regional as well as international actors are yet to take decisive steps to cooperate and coordinate with other actors on the ground to ensure the delivery of aid to those in need. With absence of critical aid, humanitarian situation and living conditions, in particular makeshift shelters and dwellings, IDP camps and places of detention, have been constantly deteriorated by the ongoing conflicts and furthermore by the recent heat wave. In prisons, where the conditions of detention have been already challenging for inmates, the lack of water and medical services has become a severe problem due to the heat wave. The situation is similar in IDP camps and other places where people fled from fighting and sheltering, as basic facilities and services are lacking, there were reports of a number of deaths from heat related causes. However, with the critical lack of humanitarian aids and absence of competent authorities that can provide effective response and assistance to their needs, people, including particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children and those forced to work under harsh conditions are reportedly left alone.

Rohingyas face particular risk of human rights and humanitarian disaster as well as another massacre in Rakhine State, where the clashes between the military and the Arakan Army are intensifying and battlegrounds are expanding.

It was recently reported that more than 40,000 Rohingyas, including women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities, were displaced by the clashes but they were not allowed to take shelter at IDP camps. There are also reports that the military is forcibly recruiting Rohingyas into its ranks as well as pro-junta militias and making them attack others, suspectedly as an attempt to stoke ethnic tensions. Exploitation and oppression of Rohingyas are purportedly committed by both parties. The current condition in the Rakhine State is not at all as such that enable safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya IDPs and refugees, while IDP and refugee camps are also in appalling situation.

Forced recruitment of civilians by the military into the junta-related militias as well as by other armed groups has been an issue for a long time. The enforcement of the conscription law has added another dimension to the risks faced by civilians, especially the youth in vulnerable groups being embroiled in the escalating spiral of violence and human rights abuses. Already the first group of 5000 conscripts was reportedly recruited in March and April and sent to military training, and the second group is being recruited in May 2024. As the junta continues implementation of the conscription law and recruitment process, a number of persons, who have resources to do so, have been seeking to evade the draft and flee the country, but those who cannot afford such options are forced to take more risky way to escape, which can make them more prone to abuses, or otherwise to be conscripted and sent to the battleground. The suspension of the permits for Myanmar men, who are eligible to be drafted, to work abroad, which was announced by the junta in May in an apparent attempt to boost conscription, deprive them of taking legal way out and make those seeking to work abroad as well as those working abroad with expiring permits more vulnerable to various human rights abuses. There have also been reports of conscription through abduction, arbitrary arrests on the streets, and other forms of coercion as well as the cases of extra-judicial killings of local administrators recruiting conscripts. Furthermore, the lack of clarity in the law, especially regarding the exemption from the conscription, creates a ground for arbitrary application and corruption, and indeed, cases of military officers taking bribes for exemption are already being reported. Concerns are also raised over the fact that many Rohingya youth are conscripted, through various ways, although they are denied of the Myanmar citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law and the 2010 Conscription Law applies to the citizens of Myanmar. It was also reported that some Rohingya youth joined the military believing that it would give them the citizenship.

People are continuing to be arbitrarily arrested and detained. Lengthy and disproportionate prison sentences as well as death penalty are imposed by courts under military control without any due process, whereby the fair trial guarantees enshrined in the international human rights law, in particular the Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is blatantly ignored and violated. Pro forma process at courts, practice of unfair trials as well as the report of a case where one person was imposed multiple death sentences all show how the judicial system in Myanmar has collapsed under the junta. Moreover, cases of torture, sexual harassment and abuses and death in custody are continuously reported. In nearly all prisons that could be monitored, the lack of clean water for drinking and shower was resulting in illness including skin problems of the imprisoned. However, they were also denied of the access to medical treatment.

Since the coup in 2021, human rights and humanitarian crisis is only worsening in Myanmar. The armed conflict is intensifying and expanding in the country, where multiple actors are engaging in fights against the military with different interests and stakes. The lawlessness is increasing, as many of the actors involved disregard international human rights and humanitarian law in pursue of their own gain, various violations are committed by different parties with impunity. The challenge to protect human rights of the people of Myanmar including ethnic minorities, Rohingyas, and other vulnerable groups are becoming more and more complex. The judicial system in the country has collapsed, in particular in the junta-controlled areas, while the administration of justice appears to be a significant challenge in the areas controlled by others too. For the absence of the decisive, stronger and coordinated action from the international community, innocent civilians in Myanmar are left alone and suffering. It is a shame that a number of UN Member States, including those sitting member of this Council still remain silent and indifferent.

1 <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/three-fold-increase-civilian-casualties-caused-landmines-and-unexploded-ordnance>