



YCGAP STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN MYANMAR

25 March 2021

The Youth Core Group on Atrocity Prevention (YCGAP) is a coalition of youth working together to strengthen the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the prevention of atrocity crime in the Asia Pacific.

Nineteen-year-old [Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing](#). Seventeen-year old [Khant Nyar Hein](#). Nineteen-year-old [Kyal Sin](#). All three were shot in the head by the Myanmar armed forces (the Tatmadaw), while participating in peaceful protests against the military. We say their names and remember their brave actions. Their photos and stories have spread far and wide on the internet, with many calling them martyrs of democracy.

Yet they are only three of the 247 protesters who have been [killed](#) in military crackdowns on pro-democracy protests since the [February 1 coup](#). More than one month since that fateful day, the killings, arrests, and deadly attacks against civilians by the Tatmadaw have only intensified, with youth forming a large number of the casualties. Of the 247 deaths, at least [108](#) were youth under 30. Many of whom were similarly killed with [shots to the head or heart](#). It is not hard to see that the military is specifically targeting the youth on the frontlines. Attacks on civilians by the Tatmadaw may amount to crimes against humanity.

Despite the danger, however, young people continue to fight in their own unique and creative ways. From placards and pot-banging, to [sarongs](#) and [memes](#), they stand united with the [The Civil Disobedience Movement](#) and many other groups against the military, [regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social class](#).

Young women like Kyal Sin and Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing are standing at the forefront of protests, many of which are [women-led](#), in contrast to the male-dominated and patriarchal Tatmadaw, whose members have systematically used [sexual violence](#) as a weapon against women from ethnic minorities, and a tool of genocide against the [Rohingya population](#) during the 2017 “clearance operations”. Other long-marginalized groups like the [LGBTQ community](#) and the [oppressed ethnic minorities](#) (which make up a third of Myanmar’s population) are also actively protesting despite the risk of further persecution— with youth again at the forefront.

However, for ethnic youth, this fight is not just one of democracy but reform. For years the country’s treatment of its ethnic minorities has been [hostile](#). Ethnic youth, especially Rohingya youth, face discrimination early in their lives— not only from the Bamar majority, but [other ethnic groups](#). Even

so, the protests have [united](#) the ethnicities, who now protest alongside the majority. To these ethnic youth, this is not a fight to return to a non-inclusive democracy, but a [chance to change the system](#)— to create a new system that would consider the rights of all ethnic minority groups, including the Rohingyas.

The Asia-Pacific region is [no stranger to protests](#) and the violence of authorities who are meant to protect us. **We, as youth of this region, stand in solidarity with the youth of Myanmar.** Though we may [brave our own battles](#), we are truly saddened and angered by the senseless violence being carried out by the Tatmadaw against the youth and protesters. The Responsibility to Protect principle obligates all states to protect their populations from atrocity crimes, including war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and genocide. Neither Myanmar nor the international community is fulfilling this mandate.

Only 30 years ago, 16-year old student activist [Win Maw Oo](#) was shot and killed by soldiers in the 1988 pro-democracy protests in Myanmar, which were ruthlessly and violently crushed by the military. We cannot allow this cycle to continue. Perpetrators of atrocity crimes must be held accountable. We know that impunity for past atrocities is an important factor in the potential for future crimes, as is the case we are now witnessing in Myanmar. Further, given the recent genocide committed by the Tatmadaw against the Rohingya population, its current willingness to violate the human rights of its population, and its documented targeting of women, minorities and young people, the potential for further atrocity crimes, including the potential for genocidal attacks, is high.

At the same time, more than a month has passed and the international community has failed to act. While some governments have implemented sanctions or cancelled defence agreements with Myanmar, civilians continue to be at risk, with more deaths every day. We must not allow this to happen. As powerless as we may feel, we must commit to continue raising awareness and advocating for international action.

In line with this, YCGAP **calls on** the international community, through ASEAN, the UN Security Council and the UN youth, peace and security agencies, as well as democratic nations of the world, to:

1. Exert pressure on the military to immediately cease violence against civilians, including youth, ethnic minorities, women, and peaceful protesters, and
2. Develop and coordinate responses to the situation in Myanmar through diplomatic, economic, and security relations, including support for civil society and local efforts in peacebuilding and protection of vulnerable populations.

While YCGAP notes the benefits of social media in facilitating information from protesters to reach the international community, we also **call on** big technology to monitor and curtail disinformation and hate speech by the Myanmar military to prevent the spread of incitement to violence and atrocity crimes.

YCGAP **urges** the Myanmar military to:

1. Immediately cease persecution and violence against peaceful protesters, and prevent attacks against women, young people, the LGBTQ community, and ethnic and religious minorities;
2. Uphold the responsibility to protect Myanmar's populations from atrocity crimes.

To young people in Myanmar, you are not forgotten. On behalf of Asia Pacific youth, the YCGAP stands in solidarity with you and will do all we can to continue to raise awareness and advocate for a peaceful resolution to the situation in Myanmar.

For more information, contact:

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