

JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

5 August 2025

MYANMAR: SYSTEMATIC DENIAL OF HEALTHCARE LEADING TO ALARMING NUMBER OF DEATHS IN CUSTODY

The undersigned organizations are gravely concerned over reports of an increasing number of deaths in custody in Myanmar, especially in the last four and a half years that has seen an unprecedented erosion of respect for and the protection of human rights. Since the 2021 military coup, over 1,800 people have reportedly died while being detained by the military junta, many owing to a systematic denial of healthcare in prisons and/or as a result of untreated injuries they sustained during abusive interrogations following their arrest. We demand that the Myanmar military urgently provide people deprived of their liberty access to adequate healthcare, of the same standard and with the same options as are available in the community and accessible to all detainees without discrimination, and put an immediate end to the torture and other ill-treatment of detainees.

Independent media and prison monitoring groups reported the death of several people in separate detention places in July 2025. Ma Wutt Yee Aung, 26 years old and a student activist arrested by junta forces in September 2021 over alleged terrorism and incitement charges, died in Insein Prison in Yangon on or around 19 July 2025. The Dagon University Students Union has expressed concern that her death may be the result of head injuries she sustained during interrogations while in detention and prison authorities' denial of adequate treatment for her despite her family's requests for her to be treated in a hospital outside the prison. On the same day, 44-year-old Ko Pyae Sone Aung, a representative of the National League for Democracy party chapter in Mon State's Belin Township, reportedly died in the State's Thaton Prison after being violently beaten. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Monland, Ko Pyae and four others were beaten with batons and kicked in the stomach. Sources were also concerned that his death was also the result of prison officials' denial of proper medical treatment for his hypertension, diabetes and clogged arteries. Arrested in January 2022, Ko Pyae was sentenced to six years in prison for alleged sedition and terrorism. Earlier in July, two other political prisoners died in separate prisons in the same month also due to medical complications.

In a September 2024 report, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that at least 1,853 people have died in custody since the 2021 coup. Based on data from monitors, over 70 people have died in custody between January and July 2025 alone. At least 59 of them reportedly died when weakened structures collapsed in Obo Prison in Mandalay Region, after a 7.7-magnitude earthquake hit the country in March 2025. The number includes people arbitrarily detained based solely on their known or perceived support for opposition groups, including the National League for Democracy that was deposed by the military in the 2021 coup. Numbers could be higher given barriers to obtaining and verifying information, especially in light of restricted access to prisons and the banning of many media outlets in the country.

The 2024 OHCHR report also describes torture and other ill-treatment in military custody as "pervasive", particularly in interrogation centres and compounds, as well as in prisons including the notorious Tharyarwaddy Prison in Bago Region. Practices in these settings include physical and psychological abuse, including sexual abuse, carried out by officials seeking to obtain confessions or information on other people allegedly affiliated with or supporting anti-military groups. Political prisoners, especially those participating in peaceful protests inside prisons against abuse, endure punishments including severe beatings, solitary confinement, new charges, and, in some cases, being transferred to more remote detention places or worse, killed during these transfers. The Political Prisoners Network-Myanmar, a monitoring organization, noted that at least 190 political prisoners have died due to abusive interrogation, other ill-treatment or denial of access to adequate healthcare since 2021 and until July 2025. Despite extensive documentation of these practices by various domestic and international groups, not one official from the military junta has been known to have been made accountable for these deaths and abuses inside prisons.

It must be noted that the widely reported torture and ill-treatment of detainees is just one facet of the dire human rights situation in the country that remains in need of sustained international attention and action. Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's military junta has killed more than 7,000 people, mostly civilians, and arbitrarily detained nearly 30,000. More than 3.5 million people have been internally displaced in the ongoing armed conflict. Human rights groups have documented indiscriminate military air strikes, killing civilians in classrooms, at weddings, in shelters and even during the

aftermath of the earthquake in March 2025, as well as the denial of humanitarian aid, all of which may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

We reiterate our long-standing calls for Myanmar's military junta to put an end to the torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, and to urgently work towards improving conditions inside detention places to bring these into line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and other international standards on detention. Detainees should be allowed timely and adequate access to healthcare and medical treatment, including being allowed to visit hospitals outside prisons to seek treatment that is not available in prison. The provision of medicines and other supplies inside detention places should be bolstered, including by allowing international aid as well as access to prisons by humanitarian and medical organizations, and family members who can deliver food, medicine and other essentials. The Myanmar military should also immediately release all people arbitrarily detained.

ALTSEAN-Burma
Amnesty International
Article 19
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
Burma Campaign UK
Chin Human Rights Organization
Exile Hub
Fortify Rights
Human Rights Foundation of Monland
Manushya Foundation
Myanmar Peace Museum
Political Prisoners Network - Myanmar
Politics for Women Myanmar