

JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

**OPPOSING MYANMAR JUNTA REPRESENTATIVES'
PARTICIPATION IN THE EU-ASEAN HUMAN
RIGHTS DIALOGUE**



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Joint Civil Society Statement Opposing Myanmar Junta Representatives' Participation in the EU-ASEAN Human Rights Dialogue

All civil society groups participating in the on-going EU-ASEAN Civil Society Forum, including co-chairs International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and FORUM-Asia, and those who have decided to pull out from the process, including Human Rights Watch (HRW), Front Line Defenders (FLD) and Protection International (PI), wish to express their dismay at the invitation of Myanmar junta representatives in the EU-ASEAN human rights dialogue on October 3. We urge both the EU and ASEAN to reconsider this decision and to disinvite any representative of the Myanmar junta.

We deeply regret the invitation of junta representatives, which contradicts the approach taken by both the EU and ASEAN in reaction to the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar that overturned the November 2020 general elections and the junta's brutal crackdown on pro-democracy activists and ethnic minorities, as well as on civil society groups, human rights defenders, trade unions, journalists, and political opponents. We reject in the strongest possible terms any effort that may be perceived as legitimizing the junta.

The European Union has taken a principled approach to the human rights crisis in Myanmar: it has **decided** not to recognize the junta, has **adopted** targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for horrific abuses committed by the junta, and has played a leading role in the establishment of the **UN Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar**. ASEAN has excluded junta representatives from summits and ministerial meetings, and Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who currently chairs ASEAN, has **proposed** that Myanmar junta representatives be excluded from other ASEAN gatherings.

The last-minute decision to invite junta representatives to the human rights dialogue is therefore not only shameful but also incomprehensible, as it seems to undermine efforts by the EU and ASEAN to reverse the worsening human rights situation in Myanmar.

We urge both sides to seriously reconsider this invitation and exclude the junta representatives from the EU-ASEAN human rights dialogue. This would send a clear and

principled message to the Myanmar military that while it continues its litany of atrocities it has no business sending a representative to a human rights dialogue. It would allow the EU and other ASEAN representatives to hold more open and frank discussions on how to better respond to the human rights crisis in Myanmar, exchanging more freely on shortcomings in either bloc's approach. It would also address safety concerns that some CSO Forum representatives may perceive, and strengthen the credibility of the EU-ASEAN human rights dialogue.