

## **Myanmar: Execution of four democracy activists highlights junta's brutality**

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn the [execution](#) carried out by the military junta against four pro-democracy activists in Myanmar. We call on the international community, including ASEAN states, to publicly denounce these grave violations committed by the junta and to hold them accountable for their crimes.

The four include prominent democracy activist Kyaw Min Yu better known as 'Ko Jimmy', who was arrested in October 2021 and Phyo Zeyar Thaw, a former lawmaker from the National League for Democracy (NLD) and rapper, who was [arrested](#) in November 2021 for allegedly committing “terror acts” by the junta. The other two activists are Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw.

The four pro-democracy activists were convicted of trumped-up charges of terrorism under the draconian 2014 Counterterrorism Law and others laws and [sentenced](#) to death in June 2022. Their closed-door trial by secretive military tribunals has been condemned due to a lack of transparency and adherence to the due process of law. Kyaw Min Yu was also allegedly [tortured](#) during his detention.

We are appalled that family members of the activists were [not informed](#) ahead of time that the executions would be carried out. Since news of the executions was released, family members have only received vague answers from officers at Insein Prison, such as that the prison procedures had already been followed. Further, the military junta continues to [refuse to disclose](#) the location and condition of the bodies of those executed. When Phyo Zeyar Thaw's mother requested for his body, the prison officers responded that there is no law that calls for the return of the body to family members. The military junta must clarify the exact date and time that the executions were carried out, as well as immediately provide information on the whereabouts of the bodies.

We condemn the cruelty of the military junta and are seriously concerned about the fate of many others who have been sentenced to death by the junta. These appalling actions are serious human rights violations and should be denounced by all members of the international community with calls for justice and accountability. With a total of 117 political prisoners being [sentenced](#) to death since the coup, failing to do so will put many other detained activists at risk of suffering the same fate.

The executions are reportedly the first [known](#) judicial executions for over the three decades in Myanmar. It was undertaken despite repeated calls from human rights groups and the international community to the junta to halt and reverse the decision. The junta has even disregarded the calls from the ASEAN chair, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia, to [refrain](#) from carrying out the executions.

The execution was conducted three days after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [dismissed](#) the Myanmar military government's preliminary objections regarding the allegation of genocide against the Rohingya, giving the possibility of the investigation as requested by the Gambia to move forward.

Since the coup in February 2021, human rights groups have [documented](#) the arbitrary and extrajudicial killings of more than two thousand individuals in the country. Thousands remain in detention facing torture and ill-treatment while the National Unity Government (NUG), the legitimate government elected by the people of Myanmar in November 2022, was [declared](#) a terrorist organisation. The junta has also [weaponised](#) humanitarian aid to undermine the resistance movement and to gain legitimacy.

Various diplomatic efforts by international and regional mechanisms, including the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus that focuses on a meaningful and inclusive dialogue toward a peaceful solution, have failed to prevent the junta from committing serious human rights violations - some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. While some countries have imposed targeted [sanctions](#), others such as Australia and Japan have failed to move in that direction and have effectively relied on the Five-Point Consensus as a solution.

By executing the activists, the military junta has sent a strong message that it has no interest in respecting proposals from ASEAN and the international community to uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the country. The international community must urgently step up and immediately deploy stronger actions to halt this brutality and hold the junta accountable.

### **List of Signatories**

1. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
2. Advocacy Forum Nepal
3. Asia Democracy Network
4. Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)
5. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
6. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS)
7. Cross Cultural Foundation Thailand
8. HapusHukumanMati
9. KontraS Aceh
10. Kurawal Foundation
11. Network for Human Rights Documentation Burma (ND-Burma)
12. Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFENet)
13. The May 18 Memorial Foundation
14. Transitional Justice Asia Network (TJAN)
15. Together Against Death Penalty (ECPM)