

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Combatting the Oppression of Marginalized Groups in Myanmar in the Midst of Conflict

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Introduction

Since the military coup in February 2021, Myanmar has fallen into a humanitarian crisis characterized by widespread violence, mass displacement, and the systematic oppression of its communities. Groups such as the Rohingya, Kachin, Shan, and many other minorities now face unprecedented levels of persecution, with crimes ranging from forced labor to ethnic cleansing. Over 19 million people in Myanmar need immediate humanitarian aid, while internal displacement and cross-border refugee flows have reached record levels.

The roots of this crisis lie in decades of military rule and policies aimed at dominating minorities while stripping them off their democratic rights. Discriminatory laws, military presence in minority regions, armed conflict, and other factors have kept these communities in a constant state of insecurity and fear.

International actors have responded with condemnations, investigations, and sanctions, but these actions are not enough. The situation poses a challenge to the Human Rights Council and the wider international community.

Definition of Key Terms

Marginalized Groups

Marginalized groups are communities that have long been cut off from access, opportunity, and representation because of how power is held.

Clearing Operations

Armed actions against specific communities, namely the Rohingya, with extensive violence, forcing people to leave, and abuse of human rights.

Rohingya Genocide

The planned effort started by Myanmar's military since 2017 to wipe out the Rohingya Muslim minority by mass killings, forcing people out, and burning of villages, which the world widely accepts as genocide.

Background

Historical Context of Marginalization and Conflict

The current conflict and crisis in Myanmar are built on decades of policies that purposefully crushed ethnic and religious minorities. After the 1962 military coup, Myanmar's government centralized control and carefully took away basic rights from minorities outside the largest Bamar Buddhist population. The 1982 Citizenship Law made the Rohingya without a home, and many years of civil wars created repeated events of large numbers of people being pushed out, systematic discrimination, and cycles of violence.

Military Rule, The 2021 Coup, and Escalation of Abuses

After a state of freedom in the 2010s, the February 2021 military coup suddenly stopped Myanmar's growing democracy. The State Administration Council (SAC), under Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, overturned years of work, launching a countrywide crackdown on opposition and making military campaigns stricter in ethnic areas. Mass protests, the Civil Disobedience Movement and the start of the National Unity Government (NUG) changed the balance of internal resistance, but also led to blanket repression from the military, including airstrikes, mass arrests, village burnings, and food blockades.

Genocide and Systematic Persecution of the Rohingya

The difficulty of the Rohingya people exemplifies the brutality of state policy. In 2017, so-called "clearance operations" by the military led to the destruction of hundreds of villages, widespread sexual

violence, and the migration of over 700,000 refugees to Bangladesh. UN reports determined these actions were carried out with genocidal intent.

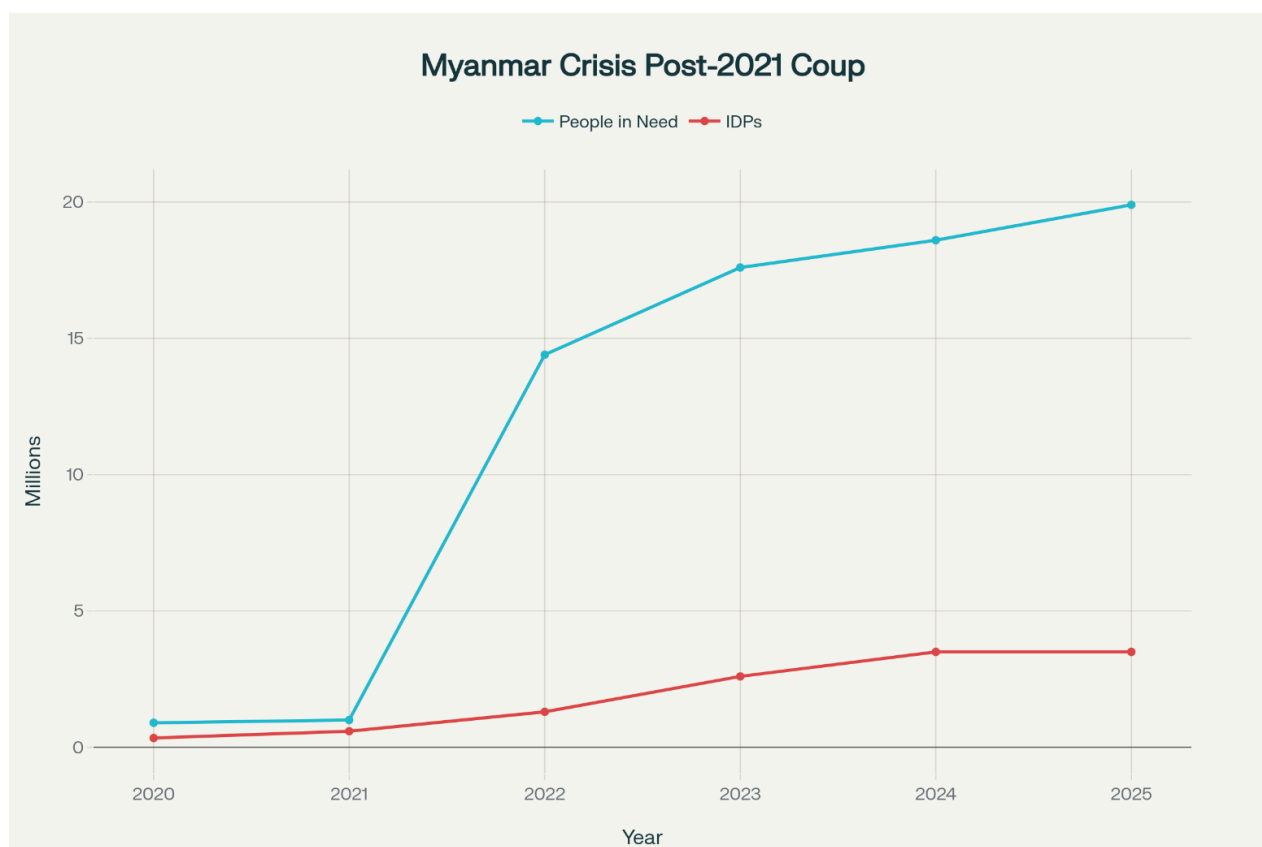


Figure 1: Myanmar's escalating humanitarian crisis from 2020 to 2025, showing dramatic increases in people in need and internally displaced persons following the military coup (IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons)

Current Humanitarian Crisis: Displacement, Aid, and Human Rights

Today, Myanmar faces an ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. According to ReliefWeb, nearly 20 million people, more than one-third of the country, now need humanitarian assistance, with over 3.5 million internally displaced. Attacks on civilian infrastructure, ethnic cleansing, and denial of aid due to the military have left entire communities cut off from essential services. Aid convoys, especially those organized by ASEAN and NGOs, have been useless, as they have been blocked by the militaries.

Impacts on Other Marginalized Groups

Beyond the Rohingya, ethnic groups like the Kachin, Karen, Shan, and Chin experience forced displacement, village destruction, and targeted abuse from both the military and, at times, ethnic armed groups. The country's LGBTIQ+ population has faced a setback, with more reports of violence and discrimination following the coup.

International and Regional Actors

Outside actors, including the United Nations, ASEAN, China, India, Bangladesh, the United States, and the EU, play important roles in diplomacy, humanitarian efforts, and accountability. ASEAN's effectiveness is hindered

by its consensus model and the principle of non-interference. Meanwhile, China holds power through its economic and political influence over Myanmar's leadership.

Legal and Political Accountability

International bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) are looking into genocide and crimes against humanity. However, real prosecution and enforcement are still limited by politics and the stubbornness of military leaders.

Major Parties Involved

United Nations (especially the Human Rights Council, OHCHR, ICC, and ICJ)

The UN has led investigations, issued resolutions, and sought international legal accountability for crimes against humanity and genocide in Myanmar. Its agencies also coordinate humanitarian relief operations.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

As the main regional group, ASEAN has tried diplomatic mediation, held summits, and proposed the "Five-Point Consensus" to address the crisis. However, its actions are often limited by the non-interference principle.

Bangladesh

Myanmar's neighbor hosts more than a million Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh works with international agencies for aid delivery and has played a key role in regional repatriation talks and advocacy for accountability.

United States and European Union

These Western players have imposed sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders, provided humanitarian aid, and actively encouraged international cooperation on accountability, human rights, and support for democracy.

China

A major regional player with strong economic and strategic ties to Myanmar. China has mediated in the conflict, influenced ASEAN discussions, and generally opposed strong international intervention, focusing on stability and non-interference.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1962	Military Coup in Myanmar sets up decades of authoritarian rule
1982	Citizenship Law excludes Rohingya and other minorities from citizenship
June 2012	Wave of communal violence in Rakhine State, Rohingya people placed in displacement camps
2016 – 2017	ARSA attacks and subsequent
Aug-Sep 2017	725,000+ Rohingya flee to Bangladesh, UN reports genocide
September 2018	UN Fact-Finding Mission formally accuses
November 2019	The Gambia files genocide cases against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice
February 1 st , 2021	Military coup removes elected government, State Administration Council formed
February – March 2021	Nationwide Civil Disobedience Movements protests; violent military crackdowns
April 16 th 2021	National Unity Government (NUG) formed by ousted parliamentarians and ethnic leaders
May 2021	People's Defense Forces announced alongside alliances with ethnic armed groups
April 2021	ASEAN attempts mediation through the Five Point Consensus
November 2023	Renewed fighting between Myanmar military and Arakan Army
May 2024	Arakan Army seizes Buhidaung in Rakhine, displacement of Rakhine
July 2025	UN Human Rights Council adopts consensus resolution on Rohingya and other minorities
2022-2025	Escalating violence in Kachin, Karen, Rakhine, and Shan states, mass displacement

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, 27 March 2017
(A/HRC/RES/34/22)
 - Established the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM) to investigate allegations of human rights abuses against the Rohingya and other minorities by the Myanmar military.

- Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, 28 September 2018 (A/HRC/RES/39/2)
 - Mandated the collection and preservation of evidence for future prosecutions and condemned ongoing military operations and systemic rights violations.
- Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, 19 March 2021 (A/HRC/RES/46/21)
 - Adopted after the 2021 coup; condemned the junta's violent crackdown, called for restoration of democracy, and urged access for humanitarian aid.
- Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, 4 April 2023 (A/HRC/RES/52/31)
 - Condemned continued violations against minorities, reaffirmed support for the Special Rapporteur, and called for targeted sanctions.
- Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, 4 April 2024 (A/HRC/RES/58/20)
 - Condemned the junta's use of airstrikes and called for restrictions on exports of jet fuel to the military.
- Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, 4 July 2025 (A/HRC/RES/59/L.21)
 - Consensus resolution by the Human Rights Council recognizing worsening conditions for minorities and Rohingya and calling for strengthened international protection and accountability efforts.
- The Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, 17 December 2021 (A/RES/76/180)
 - General Assembly resolution condemning the military coup, demanding the release of political prisoners, and urging protection for minorities.
- The Gambia v. Myanmar: Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, International Court of Justice, ongoing since 11 November 2019.
 - Ongoing legal proceedings in which The Gambia accused Myanmar of committing genocide against the Rohingya, leading to provisional measures ordering Myanmar to protect the Rohingya from further harm and preserve evidence.

Possible Solutions

The delegates must take a strong stance on effective measures to reduce violations by the military junta. This could include calls for stricter enforcement of arms embargoes and tighter controls on dual-purpose items imported into Myanmar. While there may be political sensitivities tied to managing influence from key supplier countries, the border states largely bear responsibility. They can enhance patrol efforts along their borders, share information, and monitor shipment routes to prevent arms from entering the area. The delegates can also discuss ways to create political frameworks that include ethnic minorities. Solid structures for negotiations that allow for potential international, or ASEAN intervention will be crucial for reaching an agreement among the central government, the National Unity Government, and ethnic armed groups. Another important area for research may be the impact of international recognition and legitimacy. Delegates can stress the need for greater recognition and acceptance by the global community for democratic organizations, especially the National Unity Government and

active civil society groups. This groundwork could encourage foreign stakeholders to support future transitional regimes or peacekeeping missions and improve channels for diplomatic communication. Protecting citizens remains a critical concern. Delegates might advocate for broader humanitarian corridors, possibly with the support or security guarantees from major regional powers. This approach would facilitate assistance in disputed areas and help prevent problems with UN supply convoys. Engaging with important regional powers like China, India, and Thailand will likely be very important in this context.

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