

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	730
Land:	Myanmar
Kilde:	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Titel:	Myanmar Military junta even greater threat to civilians as it imposes military draft warns UN expert
Udgivet:	21. februar 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	3. april 2024

Document #2105983

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Author)

Myanmar: Military junta even greater threat to civilians as it imposes military draft, warns UN expert

NEW YORK (21 February 2024) – Myanmar’s military junta is becoming an even greater threat to civilians, even as it shows further signs of weakness and desperation through the imposition of mandatory military service, warned a UN expert.

Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, today called for stronger international action to protect increasingly vulnerable populations.

“While wounded and increasingly desperate, the Myanmar military junta remains extremely dangerous,” he said. “Troop losses and recruitment challenges have become existential threats for the junta, which faces vigorous attacks on frontlines all across the country. As the junta forces young men and women into the military ranks, it has doubled down on its attacks on civilians using stockpiles of powerful weapons.”

ecoi.net description:

Military junta introduces mandatory military service for men aged 18 to 35 and women aged 18 to 27; draft evasion or assistance to others in evading military service can be punished with up to 5 years in prison

Country:

Myanmar

Source:

[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Author)

On 10 February, the junta issued an order that purportedly brought the 2010 People's Military Service Law into force. Citizen men aged 18 to 35 and citizen women aged 18 to 27 are eligible for conscription, though "professional" men and women can be conscripted up to the ages of 45 and 35 respectively. Those who evade military service or help others evade military service are subject to up to five years imprisonment. A junta spokesperson has indicated that the junta intends to conscript 5,000 individuals per month beginning in April.

In the face of inaction by the Security Council, the Special Rapporteur urged States to strengthen and coordinate measures to reduce the junta's access to the weapons and financing it needs to sustain its attacks on the people of Myanmar.

"Make no mistake, signs of desperation, such as the imposition of a draft, are not indications that the junta and its forces are less of a threat to the people of Myanmar. In fact, many are facing even greater dangers."

"By seeking to activate the conscription law, the junta is trying to justify and expand its pattern of forced recruitment, which is already impacting civilian populations around the country. In recent months, young men have reportedly been kidnapped from the streets of Myanmar's cities or otherwise compelled into joining the military's ranks. Villagers have reportedly been used as porters and human shields," said Andrews. "Young people are horrified by the possibility of being forced to participate in the junta's reign of terror. The numbers fleeing across borders to escape conscription will surely skyrocket."

The Special Rapporteur also called for an infusion of humanitarian aid for impacted communities, including through the provision of cross-border aid.

"I implore the international community to provide increased levels of humanitarian aid to those impacted by the conflict while supporting leaders committed to a democratic transition process that affirms human rights, transparency, and accountability," he said.

"Now, more than ever, the international community must act urgently to isolate the junta and protect the people of Myanmar."

Original link:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/myanmar-military-junta-even-greater-threat-civilians-it-imposes-military>

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

21 February 2024

Available on ecoi.net since:

22 March 2024

Document ID:

2105983

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Mr. Thomas Andrews (United States of America) is the [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar](#). A former member of the US Congress from Maine, Andrews is a Robina Senior Human Rights Fellow at Yale Law School and an Associate of Harvard University's Asia Center. He has worked with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs and parliamentarians, NGOs and political parties in Cambodia, Indonesia, Algeria, Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine and Yemen. He has been a consultant for the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma and the Euro-Burma Network and has run advocacy NGOs including Win Without War and United to End Genocide.

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation
(ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T +43 1 589 00 583
F +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

