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UN Security Council: Historic Censure of Myanmar Junta

First Such Resolution Recognizes People’s Brave Calls for Democracy

(New York) – The United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on December 21, 2022, denouncing the [Myanmar](#) military’s rights violations since the February 1, 2021 coup, Human Rights Watch said today. The landmark resolution, passed with 12 yes votes and 3 abstentions, reflects the Myanmar junta’s growing isolation generated by security force abuses amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

It is the first Security Council resolution on Myanmar since the country, formerly known as Burma, acquired independence from Britain in 1948.

“The Security Council resolution is a momentous step on behalf of the people of Myanmar, opening the door toward holding Myanmar’s brutal generals to account,” said [Elaine Pearson](#), Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “The resolution should bring renewed scrutiny to the junta’s daily atrocities and recognition of the Myanmar people’s brave efforts toward democracy and freedom.”

The resolution, which the United Kingdom drafted under the UN Charter’s [Chapter VI](#) concerning “pacific settlement of disputes,” expresses deep concern at the “ongoing state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 and its grave impact on the people of Myanmar.” It condemns the military’s [execution of pro-democracy activists](#), urges the military to “immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners,” and demands an “immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the country.”

The resolution includes numerous references to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which adopted a “five-point consensus” in April 2021 in response to the Myanmar coup. Junta chief Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing [has since defied each point](#) of the consensus while exploiting the international community’s deference to the regional bloc, Human Rights Watch said. The secretary-general or his special envoy on Myanmar is tasked with reporting orally by March 15, 2023, to the Security Council on UN support for implementation of the five-point consensus.

All Security Council members voted for the resolution, except for China, India, and Russia, which abstained.

The junta’s [widespread and systematic abuses](#) since the coup – including extrajudicial killings, torture, and indiscriminate attacks on civilians – amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. Security forces [have killed](#) over 2,600 people and arbitrarily arrested over 16,000, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

The military has expanded abusive operations in ethnic minority areas, displacing more than one million people, and [deliberately blocked](#) humanitarian assistance from reaching populations in need as a form of collective punishment. The resolution calls for “full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access,” expressing deep concern at the “increasingly large numbers of internally displaced persons and dramatic increase in humanitarian need.”

Activists in Myanmar have pressed for a Security Council resolution on the country for decades. China and Russia [vetoed](#) a 2007 draft condemning the then-military government’s attacks on civilians and detention of political prisoners. Calls for a resolution by UN experts, human rights groups, and others in response to the [atrocities against the Rohingya](#) in 2017 went unanswered. This was largely due to China and Russia’s resistance, but also concerns on the part of Western governments of alienating the now-ousted civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been in military custody since the coup.

The Security Council has issued statements of condemnation on Myanmar in the past and received numerous briefings from UN experts and the secretary-general. Under resolutions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the council has debated reports on abuses against children in Myanmar. This resolution represents a significant escalation of the council’s engagement on Myanmar and offers a basis for sustained future monitoring of the situation in the country, Human Rights Watch said.

This first-step resolution should be followed by close monitoring and reporting on the junta’s compliance and further

action by the council. Human Rights Watch has long called on the Security Council to impose a global arms embargo, refer the country situation to the International Criminal Court, and impose targeted sanctions on junta leadership and military-owned companies. The initial draft of the resolution called for an immediate end to arms sales to Myanmar, which was later removed.

“China and Russia’s abstentions signal that even the junta’s few friends have lost interest in sticking out their necks to defend its atrocities,” said [Louis Charbonneau](#), UN director at Human Rights Watch. “The building blocks put in place with this resolution offer a starting point for reinvigorating pressure on the junta among Security Council members and governments across the globe.”

ecoi.net summary:

Article on a resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council that reflects the junta’s growing isolation generated by security force abuses, crimes against humanity and war crimes

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