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Myanmar: Military actions compound dire humanitarian situation in aftermath of deadly earthquake

GENEVA – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk stressed on Friday that the announcement of a pause in hostilities – by both the Myanmar military and the National Unity Government – must be followed by immediate and unrestricted access by rescue and humanitarian workers to all those in need.

“I urge a halt to all military operations, and for the focus to be on assisting those impacted by the quake, as well as ensuring unhindered access to humanitarian organizations that are ready to support,” Türk said. “I hope this terrible tragedy can be a turning point for the country towards an inclusive political solution.”

In the days following the deadly earthquake that tore through central Myanmar last week, the Myanmar military continued operations and attacks, including airstrikes – some of which were launched shortly after tremors subsided, according to reports received by the UN Human Rights Office.

The Office has received reports that the military has carried out at least 53 attacks, including strikes by aircraft and drones, artillery and paramotors in areas affected by the earthquake. At least 14 attacks by the military have been reported since they announced a temporary ceasefire taking effect on 2 April.

The Office has also received reports that the military has continued its conscription drive, forcibly recruiting able-bodied young people assisting

the rescue efforts.

While humanitarian efforts have progressed in certain areas where access has been granted, the longstanding limitations imposed by the military on humanitarian operations and access across the country have meant that numerous badly impacted areas, including large towns in Sagaing region and areas of Bago and Shan State have remained inaccessible to humanitarian emergency assistance – except for what can be organized locally by residents.

Despite certain capacities of the military, expert personnel, equipment and services needed to save lives in urgent peril have been lacking.

“Sources from the ground describe a catastrophic humanitarian situation in earthquake-hit areas, especially those outside the military’s control, an absence of relief efforts, and a lack of clean water, food, and medicines,” the High Commissioner said. “Fear and shock have augmented the suffering of a civilian population already subjected to four years of military violence since the coup.”

The scale of the disaster has been exacerbated by an information blackout, due to Internet and telecommunication shutdowns imposed by the military, making it extremely difficult to contact affected communities and assess the situation.

“The humanitarian and protection needs of the civilian population must be addressed without delay and without restriction. Thousands of political prisoners still remain arbitrarily detained in horrendous conditions. It is unclear what impact the earthquake had on their places of detention. They should be released immediately,” the High Commissioner said.

“It is critical that international assistance reach the people of Myanmar through international coordination mechanisms and support the civil society and community-based networks that are playing the frontline role to provide relief on the ground.”

“The people of Myanmar have suffered enough. The response to this horrendous disaster must open pathways towards a comprehensive solution that upholds democracy and human rights.”

ecoi.net description:

According to reports, the military has carried out at least 53 attacks in areas affected by the earthquake on 28 March 2025; since the announcement of a temporary ceasefire on 2 April 2025, the armed forces have conducted at least 14 attacks

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