

IMUN Security Council

Officer Report 2021

The question of the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar

Introduction:

Myanmar has been under restrictive rule for almost 200 years. Since they gained independence it has been a turbulent journey between independence and military control. Now after a period of democracy, the military has staged a coup and accused State Counsellor Aung Sang Suu Kyi of various crimes. There have been widespread protests throughout the country, but the military's control of the internet and public situations has made it difficult to organize events and spread information. For the last couple of years, before the coup, more information has come forth regarding the treatment of minorities in Myanmar. The government has been accused of ethnic cleansing, something that they deny. It is imperative that a long-lasting solution is developed combatting military action in Myanmar but also the treatment of its citizens, especially minorities.

Definitions of key terms:

Ethnic cleansing: the persecution and targeting of a specific ethnic group(s) in order to create a less ethnically diverse environment.

National League for Democracy: Myanmar's leading democratic party lead by Aung Saan Suu Kyi. Abbreviated as the NLD.

State Law and Order Restoration Council: Military party created after the 1988 *coup d'état* by General Saw Maung. Ruled Myanmar from 1988 to 2011. Abbreviated as SLORC.

Background information:

Myanmar, also known as Burma, was a British colony from 1824 to 1948. After the gain of their sovereignty, a stable period followed until 1962 when the military staged a *coup d'état*. The military controlled the country as the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, and it was a one-party state. In 1988 there were widespread protests throughout the country calling for democracy. General Saw Maung staged a coup against the government and formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). They declared martial law due to the severity of the situation and pledged to hold elections at a later date. On the 27th of May 1990, the first multiparty elections were held in 28 years. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election with a significant margin of victory, but the military refused to give up their power. Aung San Suu Kyi was a prominent activist for democracy in Myanmar who went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 while she was under house arrest. Although she became a symbol of the fight for democracy, her image has been tarnished by her refusal to condemn and acknowledge Myanmar's ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people who are a Muslim group situated in the west of the country. The SLORC ruled until 2011 when the first truly democratic elections were held. The NLD won with a majority and Aung San Suu Kyi was declared State Counsellor. She could not be appointed the title of President as she had children with foreign citizenship, but she was widely regarded as the state leader. The NLD won again with a landslide victory in the 2015 elections. In 2017 Suu Kyi was criticized internationally due to government persecution of the Rohingya ethnic group, impacting her international reputation. The government does not recognize Rohingyas as citizens leading to more than 700,000 fleeing to Bangladesh.

The Situation:

9 years after the first democratic election, the military, under control of military commander Min Aung Hlaing staged a coup against the NLD. The reasoning behind the coup was claims of election fraud leading to the military declaring a 1-year state of emergency. Min Aung Hlaing has been internationally criticized for his role in the persecution of minority groups in Myanmar, especially the Rohingyas. It is likely that government protection is the only thing preventing him from being punished for his crimes, something that is becoming increasingly difficult as Myanmar shifts towards democratic ideals. There have been widespread protests opposing the coup which the government has cracked down on. To combat protests and the gathering of people, the government has turned off the internet for extended periods of time, imposed curfews, used non-lethal crowd control tools, and have even used live ammunition to disperse crowds. Due to the conflict, many lack adequate food sources and food prices have risen resulting in many turning to cheaper, less nutritious alternatives. The country has also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic with 38 cases per 100,000 as of the 21st August 2021.

Focus of the debate:

The debate will be focused on diplomatic solutions that can take on the root of the problem but can also include improving the situation for Myanmar's citizens, as long as they also contribute to resolving the political situation as well. All delegations will be influential, but countries situated in the region, especially China, will have an increased say in the issue. China vetoed a UN resolution condemning the coup, but it is speculated that it doesn't mean that they are in support of it. China is one of Myanmar's closest economic allies and it is suggested that they disagree with international intervention in a region that is of great significance so close to home. Delegates should also look at Myanmar's treatment of minority

groups such as the Rohingyas and what action can be taken in order to combat the widespread ethnic cleansing. Additionally, the debate will take on the issue of the lack of democracy in Myanmar and delegates should discuss potential actions that can be taken as a result of the lack of democracy. Due to the severe political situation and immense humanitarian aid required in Myanmar, there should be very little issue for delegates to find innovative and unique solutions that combat the crisis in an efficacious manner.

Research:

The coup in Myanmar was of increased relevance at the start of this year but has now slipped out of the media's attention making it difficult to find updated information. There is also a lack of Security Council resolutions regarding the conflict in Myanmar, likely due to the contrasting views some Member States have on the issue. The drastic differences in opinion in the Security Council make it essential that all delegations work to reach a consensus on the issue. As mentioned previously in the report, this is not the first coup in Myanmar. Therefore, it could be useful to research previous coups and the international actions taken to address them. Additionally, delegates should look at the websites of human rights groups such as [Amnesty International](#) or [Human Rights Watch](#). There is also a plethora of UN sources such as [UN News on Myanmar](#), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights report on [the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar](#) and the [report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#). The latter is incredibly long and detailed, so it is recommended to read through the conclusions and recommendations section. Good luck researching!

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