

**STATEMENT OF FORMER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASEAN COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN (ACWC) ON THE CHILD RIGHTS SITUATION IN MYANMAR**

**30 April 2024**

We, the former Representatives of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), strongly condemn the ongoing human rights catastrophe in Myanmar and urge the UN, ASEAN, and key governments to take urgent and appropriate corresponding measures.

Over the past years, intensified fighting between the military and ethnic armed groups have left thousands of civilians killed, seriously injured, detained, and displaced from their homes and communities. Just recently, an airstrike on a school in Myanmar's Karenni state killed four children and injured at least 15 others.<sup>1</sup> Another airstrike by the military also killed civilians, including nine children, as they gathered to attend church last January.<sup>2</sup> The attacks on civilians show no signs of stopping.

The international community must turn its eye to what is happening in Myanmar. Attacks against schools, churches, and especially children are a grave violation of children's rights and international humanitarian law.

As of February 2024, more than 2.7 million people have been internally displaced in Myanmar and are living in unwarranted conditions. More than 18.6 million people, including six million children, are in need of humanitarian aid in 2024 more than 18 times the number before the military takeover in 2021.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the number of children living in poverty has doubled from 4.7 million in 2017 to 9.9 million in 2022.

The violence and horrendous attacks on civilians clearly violate the principles in the ASEAN Charter to which Myanmar is a signatory including the adherence to the rule of law, good governance, and respect for and protection of human rights.

We reiterate the call to hold the Myanmar military accountable for the violence in Myanmar, to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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<sup>1</sup> The Guardian. 2024. Myanmar: airstrike on school killed four children, witnesses say.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/feb/07/myanmar-military-airstrike-karenni-state-school-daw-si-ei-village>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International. 2024. Military air strikes that killed 17 civilians 'must be investigated as war crimes.'

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/myanmar-military-air-strikes-that-killed-17-civilians-must-be-investigated-as-war-crimes/>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF. 2024. UNICEF Myanmar Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1.

<https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/reports/unicef-myanmar-humanitarian-situation-report-no-1>

(UNCRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to facilitate continuous dialogue among all concerned parties, and ultimately save and protect the children at all costs.

Specifically, we urge the following:

- For **donors** to urgently scale up funding for humanitarian assistance for children, particularly child protection, food security, nutrition, health and mental health, wash and sanitation, and education
- For **ASEAN** to swiftly provide humanitarian aid, especially to children, through its various channels
- For the **UN Secretary-General** and the **ASEAN** to strengthen the roles of the UN Special Envoy on Myanmar and the Special Envoy of ASEAN Chair to work with ASEAN member states and all concerned parties to speed up the resolution of the Myanmar crisis, and ensure that the concerns and voices of children and women are taken into account in the conflict resolution and peace-building processes
- For **ASEAN member states** to work together towards implementing the five-point consensus, with a timeline and milestones for progress to resolve the crisis in Myanmar
- For the **UN Security Council** to take appropriate measures to maintain peace and security to support and complement ASEAN's political leadership in finding a political solution to the crisis
- For **governments** to ensure that the sales of arms to the Myanmar junta is halted, calling on those nations who continue to sell arms to cease, and calling for a global arms embargo
- For **Myanmar's neighboring countries** to monitor their borders to ensure safe passage to refugees, to widen access to humanitarian aid, to reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers in the region as stated in the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations and the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration, as well as strengthen protection services in compliance with international humanitarian law and as signatories of the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the ASEAN Regional Plans of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children

- For **humanitarian organizations** to intensify family tracing and reunification efforts to help unaccompanied and separated children in Myanmar
- For the **ACWC** to fulfill its purpose to “uphold, promote, protect, respect, and fulfill the rights of women and children in ASEAN to live in peace, equality, justice, dignity, and prosperity”

Signed by:

Amihan Abueva, former Philippine Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC

Aurora Javate de Dios, former Philippine Representative on Women’s Rights to the ACWC

Datin Paduka Hajah Intan, former Chair of the ACWC

Dato Noor Aziah Mohd Awal, former Malaysia’s Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC

Datuk Dr. Chiam Heng Keng, former Malaysia’s Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC

Mae Fe Templa, former Philippine Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC

Taufan Damanik, former Indonesian Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC

Yuyum Fhahni Paryani, former Indonesian Representative on Children’s Rights to the ACWC