



Christian Conference of Asia

• **Payap University, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand**
Tel: +66-(0)53-243906, 243907 Fax: +66-(0)53-247303

31 March 2021

Joint Statement by the WCC and the CCA on the continuing deterioration of the situation in Myanmar

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) are gravely concerned over the ongoing violence and the brutal attacks by military and security forces against peaceful protesters who oppose the military coup that took place on 1 February 2021. The opposition to the coup is supported by a large section of people across the country who lived in freedom in a relatively peaceful situation for a decade. People from all walks of life such as civil servants, students, working class as well as religious leaders, including Buddhist monks, became part of nationwide protests and a mass campaign of civil disobedience ensued against the junta. It is unfortunate that security forces have responded with mass arrests and at times lethal force. The civilian death toll in the military's crackdown on protesters passed 520 as of today.

The excessive and disproportionate force by Myanmar's military against the civilians is a matter of grave concern. The present crisis situation in Myanmar has grave implications not only within the country but also for its neighbours. The ongoing brutal crackdown by the military displaced hundreds of thousands of people internally. Nearly three thousand people have been arbitrarily arrested, with many people being subjected to enforced disappearance. As the Army continued its airstrikes villagers are hiding in the jungle and many people have fled to neighbouring Thailand and India. The air assaults on Karen state are reported to be the most significant attack for years in the region controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU). It is widely believed that the Myanmar military is re-intensifying ethnic conflicts to keep its illegal hold on power. In this situation, the WCC and the CCA as well as their member churches across the world express profound dismay.

The people of Myanmar need help from the international community to overcome their painful situation. The WCC and CCA call on the Myanmar military leaders to desist from lethal force against demonstrators. The international community needs to act urgently with constructive actions to ratchet up pressure on Myanmar military to disengage and withdraw from barbarous acts. We believe that it is absolutely essential to release all prisoners, and to respect the results of the elections, and make possible a democratic transition in the country.

We call on the United Nations' Security Council (UNSC), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to promptly act and to hold the military regime accountable for protecting the dignity and human rights of the people of Myanmar. ASEAN's continuing efforts to engage with all relevant parties in Myanmar is the need of the hour. We urge the ASEAN community to push for the restoration of civilian government and take initiative for the conducting of observer-monitored, unfettered elections within a determined period of time.

Echoing the call from the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, nations must gather for an emergency international summit on a virtual platform and follow it up with robust, coordinated action to remedy the situation. We also appeal to countries and companies that facilitate the Myanmar military in their acquisition of arms to stop their support, in a context where live ammunition is being used with brutality against unarmed people.

During this Passion Week, we call on churches world-wide, to pray and advocate for the churches and people of Myanmar, who are being terrorized with violence and death: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9)

Let us uphold them in our prayers, and affirm the sanctity of life and the dignity of all God's people. May international solidarity, with prayer and action, be the sign of hope, inspired by the risen Christ, to liberate the people of Myanmar from oppression and pain.

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă
Acting General Secretary,
World Council of Churches

Dr Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary,
Christian Conference of Asia