



Statement on the military coup in Myanmar

1 February 2021

International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) strongly condemn the military coup and attack on civilian rule in Myanmar that took place on 1 February 2021.

On Monday morning, just hours before the first scheduled session of the recently elected Myanmar parliament, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Military) declared a state of emergency and moved on to arrest the National League for Democracy party leadership, including Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, the head of the country's government. Phone connections countrywide were disrupted for a few hours and the scale of arrests is yet to be confirmed. The Tatmadaw's statement proclaims that the state of emergency will last for a year after which new elections will be organized.

Since the restoration a decade ago of competitive elections and the installation of a quasi-civilian government, Myanmar has been on the path to a more participative and inclusive political system. While not without its flaws, this system allowed for broad and meaningful participation of the civil society, including Indigenous Peoples organizations and activists, in shaping the future of the country. The peace process in ethnic minority regions between Indigenous armed groups and the military have progressed, although slowly, the past decade. The military coup poses a clear danger to these achievements.

Lessons learned from the long history of the military rule in Myanmar in the past, point out the following potential mid and long-term effects of the military coup which are of special concern:

- The process of democratic transition in Myanmar stalled and civil society, including Indigenous Peoples organisations are at risk of being removed from decision-making processes. Even if a civil government is restored in one year's time, as announced by the military, it will potentially take a long time for the people of Myanmar to regain their trust in the democratic processes and institutions.
- The Tatmadaw's agenda will now dominate the peace process in Myanmar. Given that the military is unlikely to accept civil society monitoring and control over its operations, it is likely that force and intimidation tactics will prevail over dialogue and negotiations. As a result, one could expect an increase in violence in regions populated by Indigenous Peoples.
- Given the dismal human rights record of Myanmar's military, it is likely that the volume of human rights violations perpetrated by the military will increase.
- While COVID-19 has already brought disastrous economic impact on Myanmar, it is likely that the Tatmadaw-led response to the pandemic will be implemented without consultations with civil society.

IWGIA and AIPP stand in solidarity with civil society and the Indigenous Peoples of Myanmar and call for:

- Immediate restoration of civil rule in Myanmar and dialogue between civil leaders and the military.
- Immediate release of political leaders, and civil society activists arrested during the coup.
- Commitment from the military to full and verifiable compliance with International Human Rights Law

IWGIA and AIPP will continue to closely monitor the situation and call the world to join us in solidarity with the people of Myanmar.

Ends

For press inquiries please contact: Nikita Bulanin – E: nb@iwgia.org C: +45 5373 2840 // Shree Kumar Maharjan – E: shree@aippnet.org

[International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs \(IWGIA\)](#) is a non-governmental human rights organisation promoting, protecting and defending Indigenous Peoples' collective and individual rights for more than 50 years.

[Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact \(AIPP\)](#) is a regional umbrella organization of Indigenous Peoples' movements in Asia. AIPP is committed to the cause of promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples' rights and human rights and articulating issues of relevance to Indigenous Peoples.