

An Urgent Appeal for Immediate International Intervention to Control Myanmar COVID-19 Crisis- National Disaster Threatening Regional Stability

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1. On July 14th, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the situation on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, demanded emergency international engagement to address a “perfect storm” of factors that are fueling a catastrophic “third wave” of COVID-19 infections. “An explosion of COVID cases, including the Delta variant, the collapse of Myanmar’s health care system, and the deep mistrust of the people of Myanmar of anything connected to the military junta, are a perfect storm of factors that could cause a significant loss of life in Myanmar without emergency assistance by the international community,” said Andrews.
2. In Myanmar, since the military coup on February 1st, 2021 the health system that was on the verge of collapse from the military’s crackdown of its citizens including healthcare professionals is once again facing a dire humanitarian crisis and is in need of urgent intervention by the international community.
3. The current surge of COVID infections due to the unstoppable Delta variant compounded by the lack of strategy and will to tackle the crisis by the military junta, together with mismanagement of vaccines and essential medical supplies including oxygen, has fueled the pandemic now spreading like wildfire. The COVID crisis in Myanmar is escalating at an alarming speed with at least over 2000 cases a day being reported (under-reported due to shortage of testing kits and manpower) and hundreds of people dying daily. But these numbers will soon explode exponentially unless there is an urgent intervention by the international community.
4. It has been proven that the regime has no heart for the wellbeing and livelihood of its people. Such utter lack of action is a violation of basic human rights and is tantamount to the crimes against humanity. The military has taken over hospitals and have fired, threatened, detained, and even killed healthcare professionals doctors, nurses and caregivers. Hospitals and the healthcare system in Myanmar are already ill-equipped to handle such unprecedented challenge and has been under intense strain with inadequate hospital beds, manpower, and essential equipment like PPE, masks, oxygen, and medicine. The healthcare system in Myanmar has now collapsed.
5. The military controls most of the functioning medical facilities and reserves treatment for the privileged few; their families and friends. Moreover, the Special Rapporteur also stated: “The junta must also account for the \$350 million in COVID aid the International Monetary Fund provided the people of Myanmar just days prior to the coup d’état.” We also ask, “Where did this money go?” A full and complete accounting is necessary.
6. While the National Unity Government (NUG) is trying to consolidate its governance, it does not control the major parts of the country including big cities which are currently rampaged by the COVID surge. With a major civil war looming, and already with hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons in areas bordering the neighboring countries, Myanmar’s COVID-19 crisis is no longer an internal affair of Myanmar but becoming a threat to the stability of the

region. It will lead to a regional crisis with catastrophic consequences. It is now of international importance to intervene in Myanmar to immediately control this deadly virus as well as bringing the violence to an end and arranging a political settlement that recognizes the will of the people of Myanmar.

7. The military junta has no desire or capacity to tackle this crisis using appropriate and effective measures according to the international guidelines and recommendations. We, MEDAID International Foundation together with overseas Myanmar health care professionals and allied organizations and community groups, collectively call for an urgent direct intervention from a third party, either UN representative, ASEAN, WHO or Western NGOs to implement a reliable and practical strategy to end this humanitarian crisis and to create 'safe health care zones' inside Myanmar where health care workers can provide care for the patients safely as soon as possible before millions perish.

Signed by:

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