

Media Release



Open Letter to Governments around the World

To: Australian media

Date: Tuesday 15th June 2021 (for immediate release)

Today 120 scholars and professionals from around the world have sent the attached Open Letter to request their respective governments to support and recognize Myanmar's National Union of Government (NUG).

Australian recipients of this powerful statement include the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as members of the Australian Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. The letter has also been sent to members of the Myanmar Parliamentary MPs Group comprising of about 30 federal MPs.

The Australia Myanmar Institute (AMI) supports this Open Letter. Our President, Christopher Lamb, is a signatory as are 15 other prominent Australians, including former Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Chris Sidoti, and over 100 academics and experts from around the world.

AMI supports this global effort and hopes our government and parliament will support the people of Myanmar and join other like-minded countries in recognizing the NUG as the established body that represents the wishes of the parliamentarians legitimately elected by the people of Myanmar in the November 2020 general election.

Recognising and engaging in discussions with the NUG will send a strong message to Myanmar's military regime that Australia respects the outcome of Myanmar's democratic process and wishes for a swift and peaceful return to democracy in their country.

For media comment, please contact:

Christopher Lamb, AMI President (m) 0423 099 121 (e) christopher.lamb17@gmail.com
May Kyel Winn, Executive Administrator (m) 0415 606 653 (e) maykyel@gmail.com

Georg Bauer

Department of History
University of Vienna
Universitätsring 1
1010 Vienna
Austria
georg.bauer@univie.ac.at

► **To the Members of the JSC on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade
Parliament of Australia**
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Members of the JSC on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of the Parliament of Australia,

I have the honour to send you this open letter signed by over 120 scholars and professionals specialised on Myanmar. In the letter, we argue that

- the illegitimate **military takeover in Myanmar is not a fait accompli**;
- Australia should **recognise and support the National Unity Government (NUG)** formed by the democratic forces in Myanmar as the legitimate government of the country;
- the NUG derives its **legitimacy from the November 2020 general elections**, but also through the broad coalition it formed amongst the people of Myanmar;
- this broad coalition also has **the potential to end the civil war** of over seven decades;
- any attempts at mediation or **“compromise”** to return to the status quo ante rely on **wishful thinking**;
- Australia should see this as **a historical opportunity for Myanmar** for democratisation, with positive effects for the whole region, and thus **support the democratic forces to succeed**.

We hope that our letter can help Australia formulate an informed response to the crisis in Myanmar. We also stand ready for a hearing/briefing by some of our signatories if that were of help to you.

For the signatories,



Georg Bauer

VIENNA, 13 MAY 2021

Georg Bauer
Department of History
University of Vienna
Universitätsring 1
1010 Vienna
Austria
georg.bauer@univie.ac.at

► **To the Members of the JSC on Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade
Parliament of Australia**
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Members of the JSC on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of the Parliament of Australia,

We, scholars and professionals from around the world working on the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, are writing to you, as we believe the time has come for governments worldwide to effectively support the struggle for democracy in Myanmar by **recognising and supporting the newly formed National Unity Government (NUG)**.

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar Military (the Tatmadaw) began its attempt to seize state power in Myanmar, thereby breaching the very constitution it itself had drafted. Despite its efforts to make up for its lack of legitimacy by brutally terrorizing the population into submission, the Tatmadaw has so far failed to establish meaningful control over the state. Due to the massive resistance by the population, the Tatmadaw has been unable to establish control over the public administration, economy, and population of Myanmar, and it has even lost further territorial control in the border areas. **The coup is thus by no means a fait accompli.**

Meanwhile, the “Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw [Union Parliament]” (CRPH) was formed by Members of Myanmar Parliament who were democratically elected in the elections of 8 November 2020. These elections were deemed credible by not only independent observers, but also by Australia. In a show of unity unseen in decades in the country, the CRPH has engaged in broad coalition-building, and joined hands with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), strike committees, trade unions, civil society organizations, and political as well as armed representatives of the many ethnic groups of the country. On 16 April, a National Unity Government (NUG) was established on the basis of an interim Federal Democracy Charter. **The NUG thus enjoys legitimacy through not only the 2020 elections but also through the broad support of the people of the country and diaspora groups;** ethnic armed organizations (EAO) included in the NUG also exert autonomy and sovereignty over various regions/territory.

This is not a minor achievement. Myanmar has historically been plagued by divisions along ethnic, religious and political lines. And while we recognize the need for the NUG to itself evolve to include more diverse voices including those from the Rohingya, now there is a historic chance that the newfound incipient unity within the population can rid Myanmar of military rule and lead the country on **a path to a federal democratic order that can also end the civil war of over seven decades** – a process that should receive global support to ensure that promises of inclusivity and federalism made now will be kept later.

While this will be an uphill battle, it is also the only viable option at the moment. **Any attempts at mediation or “compromise” to return to the status quo ante rely on wishful thinking** and go against the expressed will of the Myanmar people. This will is represented by their elected

government, the NUG, and illustrated by the massive mobilization of Myanmar citizens to demand democracy. The Tatmadaw has itself destroyed any remaining trust in its own “roadmap to discipline-flourishing democracy” by massacring its own population and has made no attempt whatsoever to de-escalate the situation and to find a compromise. In any case, Australia is certainly not in a position to be a mediator in a negotiated scenario in Myanmar. This should be left to the UN and regional actors.

Rather, democratic countries should expressly stand with the people of Myanmar in their struggle for democracy. We must go beyond purely punitive measures and find ways to actively support the democratic forces. **The best way to do so is by publicly recognizing and supporting the NUG as the legitimate government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.** As Australia has already condemned the military coup and called for “restoration of democracy”, recognizing the NUG should be a logical next step.


The position “We only recognize states, not governments,” should not be used as a rote excuse. Besides the fact that there are recent examples where countries have declared recognition of governments in contested cases, there will inevitably arise situations requiring an implicit recognition of either the Tatmadaw’s illegitimate “State Administrative Council” (SAC) or the legitimate NUG, as the recent crisis around the Myanmar embassy in London has shown.

Time is short. Over 840 people have already been killed, dozens of which were children. Neighbourhoods throughout the country are being terrorized by an army that behaves like a heavily armed, out-of-control criminal cartel. In the borderlands, the over 70-year-old civil war is escalating, with civilians being bombed by the Air Force, and thousands of refugees trying to escape to India and Thailand. **The coming weeks and months will determine** whether the country goes back to potentially decades of incompetent, brutal and devastating dictatorship under a military that stands accused of genocide and crimes against humanity by the UN, resulting in a genocide case before the ICJ, or whether the people of Myanmar will have the **opportunity to face their multiple challenges in a democratic manner**, and once and for all overcome the structures that allow the military elites to exercise undue influence across the country.

Australia, who has committed to advancing human rights globally, can and must play its part to support this momentous task, **which will have a positive effect for democratisation in the whole region.** The people of Myanmar will pay close attention and will always remember who is on their side right now.

We remain at your disposal for questions, including in a hearing/briefing if so desired, and send our best and hopeful regards,

For the signatories,



Georg Bauer

VIENNA, 13 MAY 2021

▶

Signatories:

Dr Ashley South, Chiang Mai University

David Scott Mathieson, independent analyst on conflict, peace, human rights and humanitarian issues

Dr Melissa Crouch, Professor and Associate Dean Research, UNSW Faculty of Law and Justice

Dr Matthew J Walton, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

Adjunct Professor Chris Sidoti, Australian Catholic University, member of the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar and formerly member of the UN Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar

Prof Martin Krygier AM, Gordon Samuels Professor of Law and Social Theory, UNSW Sydney

Prof Catherine Renshaw, School of Law, Western Sydney University

Dr Nick Cheesman, Fellow, Australian National University

Dr Adam Czarnota, Associate Professor, The University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

Jonathan Liljeblad, PhD, JD, Senior Lecturer, College of Law, Australian National University

Dr Anne Décobert, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne

Professor Emeritus Joseph Lo Bianco, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Dr Michael Breen, School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne

Christopher Lamb, President, Australia Myanmar Institute

John Langmore AM, Professorial Fellow and Chair, Initiative for Peacebuilding Board, School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne

Sam Maitland, Independent Analyst on Human Rights in Myanmar, Melbourne

Professor Ian Rutherford, School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Science, The University of Melbourne

Justine Chambers, Visiting Fellow, School of Culture, History and Languages, Australian National University

Prof. Michael W. Charney, Chair of Asian and Military History at SOAS, University of London

Kelley E. Currie, former US Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues

Philipp Annawitt, Democratic Governance Specialist

Rosalie Metro, University of Missouri-Columbia

Dr Ronan Lee, Queen Mary University of London

Dr David Brenner, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex

Kim Jolliffe, Independent

Prof. Dr Boike Rehbein, Department of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University Berlin

Prof. Dr Claudia Derichs, Department of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University Berlin

Prof. Dr Judith Beyer, Head of Research Group “Social and Political Anthropology”, University of Konstanz / Myanmar-Institute e.V

Dr Juliane Schober, Professor, Arizona State University

Dr Jotika Khur-Yearn, SOAS Library, University of London

Tyler Giannini, International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School

Dr Daniel M. Stuart, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, University of South Carolina

Prof. Bridget Anderson, Director Migration Mobilities Bristol, University of Bristol

Isla Glaister, CEO, Business Plan for Peace

Prof. Kate Crosby, King’s College London

Mratt Kyaw Thu, Freelance Journalist

Dr Frances O’Morchoe, Parami Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Angshuman Choudhury, Senior Researcher and Coordinator, South East Asia Research Programme, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi

Dr Khin Myo Wai, Independent Researcher

Dr Karin Dean, School of Humanities, Tallinn University

Prof. Willem van Schendel, University of Amsterdam

Dr Pavin Chachavalpongpun, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

Mikael Gravers, Associate Professor Emeritus, Anthropology, Aarhus University

Dr Jotika Khur-Yearn, SOAS Library, University of London

Dr Rainer Einzenberger, (Lecturer) Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna

Georg Bauer, Department of History, University of Vienna

Samia Akhter-Khan, Department of Psychology, Humboldt-University of Berlin / Myanmar-Institute e.V.

Carlos Sardiña Galache, independent journalist

Francesco Buscemi, Emerging Research on International Security, Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies

Dr Felix Girke, HTWG Konstanz

▶

Manuela Oppenheim-Bohlander, Medical Assistant, Ethnologist, Development cooperation Mingalaba Global Help (support of local NGOs in Myanmar)

Htet Min Lwin, Department of Humanities, York University, Toronto

Dr François Robinne, Anthropologist, senior researcher at National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Aix-Marseille University, France

Chloé Baills, Department of Religious Studies, Practical School of High Studies (EPHE), France

Dr Louise Pichard-Bertaux, Institut de recherches asiatiques, CNRS-Aix Marseille University, France

James F. Cerretani, Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths- University of London

Ye Ni, Irrawaddy News Editor

Dr Jella Fink, Weltfriedensdienst e.V./ Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Diana M. Tobias, Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Jennyfer Hake, Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Mirja Brand, Weltfriedensdienst e.V.

Johanna Neumann, Department of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University Berlin / Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Esther Tenberg, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society / Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Felix Hessler, KURVE Wustrow / Myanmar-Institut e.V.

Judith Kunze, Friedensfachkraft KURVE Wustrow

Hon. Prof. Dr Nicole Haeusler, University of Sustainable Development, Eberswalde/Germany

Dr Jenny Hedström, Swedish Defence University

Carolin Hirsch, PhD candidate in Social and Political Anthropology, University of Konstanz / Myanmar-Institute e.V.

Benedict Mette-Starke, PhD researcher at Research Group “Social and Political Anthropology”, University of Konstanz / Myanmar-Institute e.V.

Megan Ryan, PhD Candidate in Political Science, University of Michigan

Dr Elizabeth Rhoads, Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Lund University

AHM Abdul Hai, PhD Researcher, University of Bonn

Dr Amporn Jirattikorn, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

Dr Kangki Megu, Principal, Indira Gandhi Government College, Arunachal Pradesh

Dr Kerstin Duell, independent political analyst

Phuong Le Trong, Sociologist, Dept. of Southeast Asian Studies, Univ. of Bonn

Laura Faludi, KURVE Wustrow e.V.

Dr Indrė Balčaitė, independent researcher

Georg Winterberger, Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, University of Zurich / Myanmar-Institute e.V.

Dr Ulrich Kuch, Faculty of Medicine, Goethe University Frankfurt

Matt Schissler, PhD Candidate in Anthropology, University of Michigan

Tony Neil, PhD Candidate in International Development, London School of Economics

Lina Knorr, PhD Candidate at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Ken MacLean, Professor Clark University

Dr Su Lin Lewis, School of Humanities, University of Bristol

Paul Taylor, Independent consultant and policy analyst, Yangon

Dr Jonathan Saha, School of History, University of Leeds

Stephen McNamara, Solicitor, The Tharathi Myay Foundation

Finbarr Sweeney, MSc Student, UCL

Sean Bain, Independent Legal Adviser

Dr Chika Watanabe, University of Manchester

Gustaaf Houtman, Royal Anthropological Institute

Dr Lisa Brooten, College of Mass Communication and Media Arts, Southern Illinois University

Dr Charlie Thame, Asst. Prof. International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University

Gayathry Venkiteswaran, Assistant Professor, University of Nottingham Malaysia

Dr Stephen Campbell, Nanyang Technological University

Jan-Philipp Sendker, Author

Andrew Dade, PhD Candidate, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Dr Kristina Kironska, Senior Researcher, Palacky University Olomouc

Courtney Wittekind, PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University

Dr Tharaphi Than, Northern Illinois University

▶

Erica Leni, PhD Candidate, DIRPOLIS, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

Alex Moodie, PhD Candidate, Durham University

Mary Kate Long, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University

Maxime Boutry, Social Anthropologist (Ph. D.) and Independent Consultant

Nicolas Salem-Gervais, INALCO, Paris

Danilo Araña Arao, College of Mass Communication, University of the Philippines Diliman

Mike McGovern, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan

Tony Scott, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

János Jelen, ambassador (1996-1998), rector, Dharma Gate Buddhist College (2010-2019), Budapest, Hungary

Dr Alexandra Green, Curator for Southeast Asia, British Museum

Liyun Wendy Choo, School of Learning, Development and Professional Practice, University of Auckland

Elin Bjarnegård, Department of Government, Uppsala University

Dr Elisabeth Olivius, Department of Political Science, Umeå University, Sweden

Kaja Berg Hjukse, PhD Candidate, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

Dr Laura Hornig, Myanmar-Institut e. V.

Gábor Vargyas, Professor of Anthropology, University of Pécs

Ponpavi Sangsuradej, PhD Candidate. Department of History. SOAS, University of London

Dr Tomas Cole, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University

Mgr. et Mgr. Dagmar Bečková, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

Mgr. Jakub Hrubý, Ph.D., Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

PhDr. Miroslav Nožina, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Institute of International Relations Prague

Sabe Soe, Executive Director, Burma Center Prague

Sam Baron, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge

Dr Graham Prescott, Institute of Plant Sciences, University of Bern

Corrie Tan, PhD Candidate, National University of Singapore and King's College London