



Human Rights Council 51st Session: UN Special Rapporteur, Thomas Andrews, on the human rights situation in Myanmar

21-09-2022 | Conference extracts

Shotlist

STORY: Myanmar Statement – Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews

TRT: 13 mins 12s

SOURCE: UNTV CH

RESTRICTIONS: NONE

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH/NATS

ASPECT RATIO: 16:9

DATELINE: 21 September 2022 GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

SHOTLIST

1. Medium shot, panel of speakers. Vice president giving floor to the Special Rapporteur.

2. Wide shot, Human Rights Council.
3. **SOUNDBITE(ENGLISH) UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews :** “ President, members of the Human Rights Council, Every time I have addressed this Council since the Myanmar military launched a disastrous coup last year, things have gotten, by any measure, worse. And with each report I have warned that unless UN Member States change course in the way they collectively respond to this crisis, the people of Myanmar will suffer even further.

I'm sorry to report that conditions have, indeed, gone from bad to worse, to horrific for untold numbers of innocent people in Myanmar.

1.3 million people have been displaced;

The military continues to bomb civilian populations. It has destroyed more than 28,000 homes, burning entire villages to the ground. Just last Friday, junta military forces attacked a school in Sagaing Region, killing at least 13, 11 of whom were children;

The number of innocent people who have been killed or injured by landmines, including children, is rising significantly;

Experts warn of a looming food crisis and a dramatic increase in childhood malnutrition;

Women are losing the economic and social gains they tenaciously fought for over the last decade;

130,000 Rohingya remain confined in de facto internment camps; they and other Rohingya in Myanmar continue to suffer severe deprivation and discrimination rooted in their lack of citizenship.

Let me be frank: the people of Myanmar are deeply disappointed by the response of the international community to this crisis. They are frustrated and angered by Member States that are working to prop up this illegal and brutal military junta with funding, trade, weapons, and a veneer of legitimacy.

But they are also disappointed by those nations that voice support for them, but then fail to back up their words with action.

The stakes could not be higher.

The Myanmar military is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity on a daily basis, including sexual violence, torture, deliberate targeting of civilians, and murder.

We saw these crimes prominently on display just three weeks after I last addressed this Council. On or around 23 July, four individuals were executed for their opposition to the military junta. They included a former parliamentarian and a prominent, longtime pro-democracy activist. These methodical, premeditated murders were carried out by an illegal, illegitimate military junta without due process of law.

As I speak, the junta is holding at least 84 other political prisoners on death row who are at risk of imminent execution. More than 12,000 remain arbitrarily detained in deplorable conditions, subject to torture. 295 of them are children, and fifty-five of these children are being held hostage to compel their parents to give themselves up.

Conflict is spreading throughout the country as more and more civilians take up arms against the junta. Ethnic Armed Organizations are increasingly engaging junta forces. Clashes between the Arakan Army and junta forces are escalating. Just last Friday, mortar shells were fired by the junta, landing over the border into Bangladesh, killing at least one Rohingya teenager. A return to full-scale conflict between the AA and the military risks displacing tens of thousands more, creating another large refugee outflow. Five years after a genocidal campaign was launched against them, the Rohingya continue to face discrimination, repression,

and human rights abuses each and every day.

Newly formed People's Defense Forces are now attacking the military throughout the country. The Myanmar military has lost nearly all the support it ever had in the Burman heartland, its soldiers deserting. The junta is deeply unpopular in every corner of Myanmar.

Not surprisingly, a humanitarian crisis has become a humanitarian catastrophe. To make matters worse, the junta is using aid as a weapon by obstructing deliveries to displaced populations and communities that they perceive to be aligned with pro-democracy forces. Untold numbers of innocent people have been left without access to food, medicine, and the means to survive.

Clearly, the international response to this deepening crisis has failed. The Foreign Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency Saifuddin Abdullah has told his colleagues in ASEAN that it is time for a "re-think" of how they are approaching this crisis. It is indeed time for a "re-think" of what the entire world is doing and, most importantly, what it is NOT doing to address this deepening crisis.

First and foremost, UN Member States who support human rights and the people of Myanmar can and must take stronger, more effective action to deprive the junta and its forces of the revenue, weapons, and legitimacy that they need to continue to attack the people of Myanmar and suppress their democratic aspirations.

If the UN Security Council will not act, those nations that stand with the people of Myanmar, including those that are imposing targeted sanctions and arms embargos, should coordinate their actions to ensure the greatest impact.

Mr. President and Members of this Council, if you believe that the people of Myanmar need and deserve a stronger response from the international community, one that goes beyond incremental, disjointed actions, urge your colleagues in your home capitals to form a coalition of nations that can build a coordinated strategy where the actions of individual nations, or groups of nations, add up to a coherent, powerful whole.

Mr. President, the amount of humanitarian aid that is available to address this crisis is grossly inadequate. More than 80% of the UN Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan remains unfunded.

Local organizations are working every day to address the escalating humanitarian needs of displaced and traumatized populations. Drawing on pre-existing networks and local knowledge, they are working tirelessly, and taking great risks. They need strong support and flexibility from Member States and donors as they work under extremely difficult conditions.

Meanwhile, this crisis is forcing many to flee Myanmar, embarking on perilous journeys across land and sea. It is imperative that the human rights of those who are literally running for their lives are protected. They are not leaving their homes because they *want* to. They are doing so because they *have* to. Resilient local communities on both sides of Myanmar's borders are working to support their neighbors in their time of need. They cannot, however, do this alone. The governments of host countries must respect the rights of those who are desperately seeking the chance to survive and they, in turn, need support and assistance from the international community. We must ALL be in this together.

Mr. President, Members of the Council, there is another important side to this crisis that we should not ignore – a very positive and inspirational side.

Since I last reported to you, I have had the honor and privilege of speaking with more than 100 Myanmar human rights defenders, pro-democracy activists, aid workers, youth leaders, and women's rights advocates. I have been deeply inspired by their courage and their tireless efforts to resist an illegal military junta that functions as a criminal enterprise, holding 54 million people hostage.

As I look at Myanmar, and indeed other areas of the world that are under siege, I am deeply moved by the

power of people to stand up to those who seek to subjugate them with military force.

Mr. President we are witnessing what humanity – at our best – is capable of. The power of people, and the human spirit to defy and, indeed, set back powerful military forces be they in Myanmar or other parts of the world. Those who command these forces, who have been deluded into thinking that they could attack and quickly subdue any who stood in their way, are now learning that, much to their surprise, there is something even more powerful than the most potent of military weapons. They are confronting the immense power of regular people who are rising up to do whatever it takes to save their families, their villages, their nation, their future.

But the fact is, they need our support.

Many in Myanmar have come to the conclusion that the world has forgotten them, or simply doesn't care. They ask me why Member States refuse to take measures that are both possible and practical, measures that could save untold numbers of lives.

Frankly, I do not have an answer.

Last month a woman human rights defender told me, 'In this situation, we can't find hope, so we create our own hope. As long as we keep going, we generate hope. ... We are seeing more and more people standing up and becoming human rights defenders. We have not experienced anything like this in the last 10 or 20 years. This makes us feel we are on the right track. That's how I can keep on going.'

Mr. President, the Human Rights Council has been referred to as the conscience of the United Nations. The people of Myanmar desperately need the members of this body to appeal to the conscience of all Member States with an urgent call to re-think status quo policies that are clearly not working and set a new course of action where the Member States of the UN stand with and for a courageous people who are fighting for their lives, their children, their future.

Thank you.”

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Story

STORYLINE

Myanmar: military is committing war crimes daily, Human Rights Council hears

Since the Myanmar military launched its “**disastrous**” coup last year, UN-appointed Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews said on Wednesday that conditions have worsened in the country, “**by any measure**”.

“**With each report I have warned that unless UN Member States change course in the way they collectively respond to this crisis, the people of Myanmar will suffer even further,**” he told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, saying that conditions have “**gone from bad to worse, to horrific for untold numbers of innocent people in Myanmar**”.

Mr. Andrews presented a grim assessment of 1.3 million displaced people; 28,000 destroyed homes; villages burned to the ground; more than 13,000 children killed as the death toll for innocent people rises significantly; a looming food crisis; and 130,000 Rohingya in de facto internment camps while others suffer deprivation and discrimination rooted in their lack of citizenship.

“**Let me be frank: the people of Myanmar are deeply disappointed by the response of the international community to this crisis. They are frustrated and angered by Member States that are working to prop up this illegal and brutal military junta with funding, trade, weapons, and a veneer of legitimacy,**” he said.

“**But they are also disappointed by those nations that voice support for them, but then fail to back up their words with action. The stakes could not be higher**”.

The Myanmar military is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity daily, including murder, sexual violence, torture, and the targeting of civilians, Mr. Andrews continued.

And conflict is spreading throughout the country as increasingly more civilians take up arms against the junta.

Moreover, a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding because military leaders are obstructing aid deliveries to displaced populations and communities they perceive to be aligned with pro-democracy forces.

“**Untold numbers of innocent people have been left without access to food, medicine, and the means to survive,**” he said.

Observing that the international response has failed, the UN expert said that “**first and foremost,**” Member States must more forcefully deprive the junta of revenue, weapons, and the legitimacy it needs to attack the Burmese and suppress their democratic aspirations.

“**Many in Myanmar have come to the conclusion that the world has forgotten them, or simply doesn’t care. They ask me why Member States refuse to take measures that are both possible and practical, measures that could save untold numbers of lives,**” he said.

“**Frankly, I do not have an answer**”.

Recalling that the Human Rights Council is referred to as the UN’s conscience, he appealed to its members to “**re-think status quo policies**” that aren’t working and set a new course of action for UN Member States to stand with and for those are “**fighting for their lives, their children, their future**”.

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