

# Regional lawmakers alarmed at the surge in violence and arbitrary arrests in Myanmar

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## **Regional lawmakers alarmed at the surge in violence and arbitrary arrests in Myanmar.**

On 2 March 2021, lawmakers from across Southeast Asia today urged the Myanmar military to immediately put an end to their campaign of arrests, unconditionally release all those currently detained, and refrain from using violence against peaceful protesters.

Bullet marks on a car which was parked in order to block the police mobility at Mandalay. (Source: Khit Thit Media)

“The scale of arrests since the coup gives you a clear indication of where the military junta is taking the country: a place with no space for critics, or any political opposition to exist,” said Mu Sochua, a Board Member of ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) and former Cambodian Member of Parliament (MP). “All regional and international actors must get this clear: there can be no way out of the current situation without all those arbitrarily arrested being released.”

According to rights organization Assistance for Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), in just four weeks at least 913 individuals, including politicians, members of the previous Union Election Commission (UEC), civil servants, human rights activists and students, have been arrested and remain in detention, or have outstanding arrest warrants against them. AAPP also estimates that about 30 individuals have been killed due to the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters by Myanmar’s security forces.

Of those arrested and detained, at least 59 are elected representatives of the Union and local parliaments. These include the State Counsellor, President and Vice President, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Chief Ministers, and Union and regional-level MPs.

Most are detained in unknown locations, without charge or access to their lawyers. Some are detained in military barracks, such as tactical command centers.

“Most of those detained have not been charged, and have not seen a lawyer, nor their families in about a month. Those people are at risk. Being out of sight is where torture and ill-treatment can happen, and we all know this is not foreign to Myanmar’s jails,” added Mu Sochua.

In the few cases where they have been charged, the laws used against the MPs include: Section 505(b) of the Penal Code (publication or sharing of statements with intent to cause fear or alarm to the public), Section 25 of the Natural Disaster Management Law (causing a disaster through any negligent or wilful act), Section 8 of the Export and Import Law (exporting or importing prohibited goods), and Section 67 of the Telecommunications Law (for possessing or using telecommunication equipment that requires a license).

In addition, the junta has been threatening and harassing members of the Committee Representing

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH). Members of the Committee took an oath days after the coup, and have pledged to continue carrying out their mandate as representatives of the people.

On 26 February, the new military-appointed UEC announced that it is illegal to form committees representing parliaments and threatened those who do so with legal action. At least 21 elected representatives, including 17 members of the CRPH, are now in hiding after they were informed that arrest warrants were issued against them under Section 505(a) or (b) of the Penal Code and/or the Natural Disaster Management Law.

By imprisoning and harrasing elected representatives who are merely exercising the mandate of the people, the military is trying to take away people's voices and choices, said APHR.

"We call on all parliamentarians worldwide to act in solidarity with Myanmar, and use their position in and outside of parliament to call for all those arbitrarily detained to be immediately released and to work for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. Let's make sure our colleagues sit in parliament, not in jail," Mu Sochua said.

### **ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)**

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