



Research Report

# Security Council

The Question of the Crisis in  
Myanmar, Regarding the 2021  
Military Coup and Rohingya Crisis



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COLLEGE

## Summary

Myanmar has faced severe crises since the military coup on February 1, 2021, which removed the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD). The Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) has brutally repressed pro-democracy protests, resulting in widespread human rights violations, including killings, arbitrary arrests, and the torture of civilians. Alongside the coup, the Rohingya crisis remains unresolved, with hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, unable to return due to security fears and systematic discrimination. The international community has made multiple attempts to address these crises, but political instability, lack of cooperation from the military, and ethnic persecution continue unabated.

## Background Information

The crisis in Myanmar has two interconnected facets: the 2021 military coup and the prolonged persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

The Tatmadaw took control of Myanmar on February 1, 2021, citing unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud in the November 2020 elections, in which the NLD secured a landslide victory. The coup led to mass protests throughout the country, and the military responded with excessive and disproportionate force, leading to over 1,000 civilian deaths and thousands of arrests. The military government has imposed restrictions on freedom of speech, association, and movement, and used internet shutdowns as a tool to limit dissent and control information.

The Rohingya crisis began in 2017, when a military crackdown targeted the Rohingya population in Rakhine State, forcing more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. The Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, have faced systemic discrimination for decades, denied citizenship, and subjected to violence and deprivation of basic rights. The 2017 crackdown was marked by reports of widespread killings, sexual violence, and the destruction of entire villages. The situation for the Rohingya refugees remains dire, with crowded camps in Bangladesh, ongoing poverty, and limited access to education and healthcare.

The political instability from the 2021 coup has complicated efforts to repatriate the Rohingya and to address Myanmar's broader ethnic tensions. Military offensives have expanded into other regions of Myanmar, targeting ethnic minorities and armed resistance groups, worsening humanitarian conditions across the country. The situation in Myanmar today represents a severe and ongoing challenge to regional stability and international norms concerning human rights and democratic governance.

## Timeline

### 2015

- The National League for Democracy wins Myanmar's general election, marking the beginning of democratic governance after decades of military rule.

### August 2017

- Myanmar military launches a crackdown on the Rohingya, forcing over 700,000 to flee to Bangladesh; widespread reports of atrocities.

### February 1, 2021

- The military seizes power in a coup, detaining NLD leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and claiming election fraud.

### February-March 2021

- Nationwide protests erupt; military uses force, leading to hundreds of civilian deaths.

### April 2021

- ASEAN agrees on a "Five-Point Consensus" calling for an end to violence and a dialogue process; implementation fails due to non-cooperation from the military.

### June 2021

- The UN General Assembly passes a resolution condemning the coup and calling for an arms embargo.

### August 2021

- Myanmar's military declares itself as a "caretaker government" and extends emergency rule, further delaying elections.

### August 2022

- Increased military offensives against ethnic armed groups; internal displacement and humanitarian issues worsen.

### August 2023

- Myanmar's military delays previously promised elections, leading to increased conflict and ongoing protests.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The United States, European Union, and other nations imposed targeted sanctions on the military junta and their associated businesses. Despite these measures, the military remains entrenched in power, partly due to the continued support from some regional players, including China and Russia.

In April 2021, ASEAN proposed a Five-Point Consensus aimed at ending violence and initiating dialogue. The consensus included appointing a special envoy, but its implementation has been largely ineffective, with Myanmar's military showing little commitment to complying with its terms.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for an end to arms supplies to Myanmar. The UN Special Envoy has also engaged with various stakeholders, but military leaders have continued to ignore international pressure and calls for accountability.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is currently handling a case filed by The Gambia, accusing Myanmar of genocide against the Rohingya. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is also investigating crimes against humanity related to the Rohingya situation. These efforts, however, face considerable challenges, including the slow pace of international judicial proceedings.

Bangladesh and Myanmar have held bilateral discussions to facilitate the safe repatriation of Rohingya refugees. However, attempts have stalled due to the lack of guarantees for the safety of returning Rohingya and ongoing persecution in Myanmar.

## Key Questions

- What steps can be taken to compel the Myanmar military to restore democratic governance and ensure accountability for human rights violations?
- How can the international community effectively enforce sanctions without harming Myanmar's vulnerable population?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure the safe and voluntary repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar?
- How can ASEAN be more effective in addressing the crisis given the divisions among its member states?
- What role should neighboring countries play in mitigating the impacts of the crisis and supporting displaced populations?
- How can international legal processes be expedited to hold perpetrators accountable for alleged crimes against humanity?
- What measures can be implemented to protect and provide humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons and marginalized ethnic groups in Myanmar?



## Major Countries and Organisations Involved

- Myanmar
- Bangladesh
- That
- India
- China
- Russia
- USA
- UK

## Wider Reading

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