



## Christian Conference of Asia

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### Statement by the WCC and CCA on the current situation in Myanmar

It is with great distress and concern that the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) follow the disturbing trend of continued lethal actions against the people by the Myanmar military (*Tatmadaw*), which overthrew the country's democratically-elected government on 1 February 2021. The death toll of civilians taking part in protests is increasing as troops and police open fire at demonstrators; at least 38 people were reported to be killed as the army unleashed a lethal campaign to suppress protests that have swept the country for more than a month.

The brutal actions against civilians protesting against the military takeover and the killings perpetrated by the military indicate that the generals are returning to the same tactics they had used to crush people's dissent during decades of military dictatorship in Myanmar. In cities such as Yangon, Mandalay, Dawei, Myeik, and Bago, citizens have been peacefully protesting against the military action through civil disobedience movements but have been confronted by the armed forces, who have used lethal force to contain the uprising with tear gas, water cannons, live ammunition, and stun grenades. In order to clamp down on what is essentially a people's movement, the security forces have systematically targeted, detained, and arrested several political officials, activists, students, medical professionals, and even religious minority leaders. In Lashio city, four Kachin Baptist ministers were among 10 people arrested at a church where protestors fleeing the state-sanctioned violence had taken shelter. The large-scale participation of civilians in demonstrations in towns and cities across the country underscore the broad rejection of the military, which controlled the country for half a century before democratic norms were restored in 2011.

The WCC and CCA condemn the declaration of the army generals that the November 2020 election, won by the National League for Democracy (NLD) with an overwhelming majority, was null and void. The democratically elected civilian government reflects the aspiration of the people. The will of the people and the outcome of the elections have to be respected and democratic processes must be restored. As we believe that the rule of law and democracy must be the cardinal parameters for ensuring peace with justice, we firmly denounce the military coup which has now returned full power to the generals.

The citizens of Myanmar possess the right to assemble peacefully and express their demands for the restoration of democracy. The fundamental rights of people must be respected, and hence the military authorities must immediately halt all use of force against civilians. While emphasizing the need for the restoration of the democratically elected civilian government and democratic

processes in Myanmar, we urge the military leaders to refrain from repressive actions against the civilians; respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, and also to pursue dialogue with the democratically elected representatives of the people of Myanmar. We call on the Myanmar military leaders to cease the illegal detention of the President of Myanmar Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Union Election Commission Chairman U Hla Thein, leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD), other civil society leaders, and media personnel. We believe that democracy has proven to be the only effective political system capable of protecting and upholding the dignity and rights of people as well as ensuring legitimate governance.

The WCC and CCA call upon all its member churches and councils, related ecumenical organizations, and members of the wider international community and people of goodwill, by any and all means possible, to support the restoration of democracy in the conflict-ridden country. We mourn the loss of life and we stand in solidarity with the peaceful and courageous people of Myanmar who seek democracy and human rights in their country. During this period of great trial, we pray for the entire people of Myanmar and for peace and justice to prevail throughout the country. In this Lenten season, the WCC and CCA uphold and affirm the sanctity of life and the dignity of all human beings. May peace and a spirit of reconciliation return to Myanmar.

*“Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace.  
And the God of love and peace will be with you”.*  
(2 Corinthians 13:11)



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