

Botschaft von Japan
Hiroshimastraße 6
10785 Berlin



Condemnation of death sentences against political prisoners in Myanmar

Your Excellency, Dear Japan Ambassador Yanagi Hidenao,

On behalf of the Myanmar solidarity movement in Europe, we would like to express our deep concern about the escalating situation in your neighboring country Myanmar. In particular, we are calling on you as the Japan Ambassador in Germany to ask your Government to clearly condemn the military junta’s announcement that it intends to execute four political prisoners. As a matter of humanity, and of standing policy to support the rule of law, we ask your Government to do everything in its power to condemn this horrible act of executing political prisoners without any fair trial.

Should Myanmar proceed with these executions - for the first time in 33 years! -, it is highly likely that this will result in [an escalation of violence](#) and further destabilization in the country like we have never seen before. As a consequence we need to foresee for civilian casualties and further increased flows of refugees to its neighboring countries. It would also be an affront to ASEAN and make any moderating efforts from its side almost impossible.

The symbolism of the death sentences speaks for itself: Phyo Zeya Thaw and Kyaw Min Yu are two of the most prominent politicians and human rights activists in Myanmar. Phyo Zeya Thaw was imprisoned in 2008 for founding the youth activist organization ‘Generation Wave’ and for his leading role in the Saffron Revolution. He was elected to parliament as the candidate of the NLD in 2015 and again in the 2020 democratic elections. Kyaw Min Yu, better known as ‘Ko Jimmy’, rose to prominence during Myanmar’s 1988 student pro-democracy uprising against the country’s former military regime. In the past weeks several media outlets reported about the junta’s intention to implement the death sentences “soon”.

These death sentences would be the first known judicial executions since [1989](#) according to BBC Burmese. Although Myanmar has retained the death penalty in law, the country had been considered 'abolitionist in practice' for the past three decades. Since the coup d'état last year, Myanmar has seen a sharp increase in the number of people on death row. At least 14100 people have been detained, of which 11043 people remain [in detention](#) to this day. Of those detained, the National Unity Consultative Council states that [114](#) civilians have been sentenced to death, without any fair trial.

The executions would be a provocation unlike any seen before. Given the high standings of the prisoners and the junta's willingness to go beyond what previous military regimes in Myanmar had dared to do, the planned executions could further entangle the country in a cycle of violence and tyranny that may be irreversible. According to the [Diplomat](#), a taboo would be broken. Myanmar is the second least democratic country in the world according to the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#).

Governments such as the Canadian and the French have openly positioned themselves against the planned executions, as has the current chairman of ASEAN, [Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen](#), as well as 199 local civil society organizations, UN experts, and many human rights organizations.

Japan has a long history of friendly relations and constructive engagement with Myanmar and has a level of influence that is so important in this particular matter. We call on you as the largest democratic power in the region to support the legitimate National Union Government of Myanmar and send a clear message to Myanmar's junta that the execution of these political prisoners would be unacceptable.

We sincerely thank you for your efforts and support.

In solidarity with Myanmar democracy,
signed by:

Educational Initiatives Prague
Info Birmanie, France

International Association, Myanmar-Switzerland
Burman suomalaiset Finland
Myanmar Diaspora Group, Finland
Karenni Society, Finland
Netherlands-Myanmar Solidarity Platform
Association Suisse-Birmanie
German Solidarity with Myanmar Democracy e.V.
Burma Campaign UK
Central European Institute of Asian Studies
Karen Swedish Community
Rohingya Action Ireland
Stiftung Asienhaus
Burma Action Ireland
Swiss solidarity for democracy in Burma/Myanmar
CRPH Support Group, Norway