

2 August 2022

Senator the Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: foreign.minister@dfat.gov.au; Senator.Wong@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister Wong,

Re: Concerns for workers in Myanmar and Australian sanctions on Myanmar Junta

I am writing regarding the ongoing human rights abuses against workers in Myanmar and the need for sanctions.

Since the violent coup in February 2021, Myanmar workers and unionists have been killed, including bank workers and workers in the finance sector. Our members are increasingly concerned about these workers and the need for their safety and the return to democracy.

Labor has consistently called for targeted sanctions against human rights abusers and coup-leaders in Myanmar. You have expressed your commitment to use the Autonomous Sanctions Amendment (Magnitsky-style and Other Thematic Sanctions) Act 2021 in response to the serious violations and abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law in Myanmar.

Such actions would be supported by, and have been at the centre of calls from, Myanmar CSOs, Myanmar diaspora, Australian NGOS and unions. In the case of Myanmar, sanctions should be targeting military-owned entities, and state-owned enterprises controlled by the military, top leaders of the military junta, their immediate families, and their business associates.

Sanctions work best when unified and as part of coordinated international action. We know that previous sanctions regimes were a significant factor in the military's decision to embark on the transition to a quasi-democratic government commencing in 2010.

Australia has the opportunity to join with traditional allies and other democratic nations/ institutions such as the UK, Canada, USA, and the EU in applying sanctions to Myanmar more broadly. This is particularly important because most of the military's economic relationships are integrated into the global economy.

At the same time, Australia can work with ASEAN Partners to secure the stability of the region. The crisis has caused significant regional instability in Southeast Asia. Since the coup, an estimated 60,000 people have

crossed borders into neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand and India. The total number of persons from Myanmar internally displaced is now over 1 million, and the number of refugees has reached 1.2 million. People on the move are vulnerable to human trafficking, people smuggling and related forms of exploitation, which the ALP has committed to tackling.

Since the coup there have been unlawful arrests of elected officials, the use of lethal force against peaceful demonstrators, persecution of journalists, enforced disappearances, the use of civilians as human shields and other human rights abuses. There are continued attacks on health care services, including the abduction, arrest, and detention of healthcare workers. Sexual and gender-based violence and rape as a weapon of war have been documented and the human rights of freedom of opinion, expression, and peaceful assembly have been oppressed. Over 11,000 civilian dwellings have been destroyed, including places of worship, with the use of fire, heavy artillery and airstrikes.

These acts, as documented in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews, amounts to serious human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, war crimes and violation of international humanitarian law.

As the leading democratic nation in the region, Australia must act on the ongoing and previous human rights violations, crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, and serious violations of humanitarian law in Myanmar.

The FSU calls on the Australian Government to introduce the first round of calculated targeted financial sanctions on:

- State-owned enterprises, and military-owned conglomerates and their subsidiaries, and,

Calculated targeted financial sanctions, travel bans, and visa bans on persons who are:

- Current and previous senior Myanmar military officials, and their immediate families,
- Senior officials of Myanmar state or military owned enterprises and their immediate families,
- Business associates of the Myanmar junta,
- Senior officers from the Myanmar security or corrections agencies.

Yours sincerely,



Julia Angrisano
National Secretary