



Joint Statement of SIGNIS, Pax Christi International and the Focolare Movement in Solidarity with the People of Myanmar

SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication, hears the cry of the courageous Burmese people as they nonviolently resist the Myanmar military coup overturning a legitimate and democratic election.

We are joined by Pax Christi International and its members in the Asia-Pacific region who in their [statement](#) of February on the “State of Emergency” in Myanmar already expressed grave concerns about the situation in the country. Likewise, the international Focolare movement unites with us in solidarity with the Burmese people.

Daily, courageous people return to the streets to protest peacefully even as soldiers beat them and shoot them, of which many young people. As a symbol of their protest, conforming to Burmese custom, a sign of the righteous anger of the people towards the military can be heard in the clatter of pots and pans banged together to protect against evil spirits,

We witness the arbitrary detention on fabricated charges of members of the democratically elected government, as well as of civilian and religious leaders who have taken part in the long struggle for democracy.

As truthful information is important in a democracy, we reject the disinformation campaign by Myanmar’s military justifying their actions. We call for the protection of journalists who are arrested and harassed for sharing news and information on what is happening on the ground with the rest of the world; instead they should enjoy press freedom.

We deplore the extreme authoritarianism that saw fit to trample on the nation’s constitution, which in fact permitted limited democracy while maintaining much of the armed forces’ power. Despite the challenges, Myanmar was taking its first steps towards democracy, giving people hope for a new future. This hope should be restored.

Above all, we listen to the message of the people of Myanmar: this coup is essentially about overthrowing them, their will. It is ultimately not about removing political opponents or supposed public order. It undoes years of patient work for the fundamental rights of citizens and crushes tenuous dreams of a free, democratic country.

As Catholic organizations, we join Pope Francis and civil and religious leaders across the globe who have condemned the coup and call for “meaningful dialogue” to restore democracy. Also, we join other organizations in calling for:

- the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained officials and leaders;
- the military to stop using violence and arbitrarily detention of peaceful protestors and journalists;
- justice and accountability for the atrocities committed by the army against the Rohingya people and other ethnic minorities, as well as prevention of such crimes and abuses in the future;
- members of the international community, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, to pressure the regime to step down and reestablish democracy, and not to exploit the situation for their own geopolitical interests.

We call upon the members of SIGNIS, Pax Christi International, and Focolare around the world to give voice to the cry of the Burmese people by reaching out to local and national media to report the situation, and by urging their governments to take strong diplomatic actions to oppose the coup and return democracy to Myanmar.

Our mission as organizations is to promote peace. We therefore stand with the Archbishop of Yangon, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, President of the Asian Bishops Conferences, when he says, “Peace is possible. Peace is the only way. Democracy is the only light to that path.”