

Myanmar's Crisis & the World

Six French Financial Institutions Still Investing in Myanmar Junta-Linked Firms: Report

Sunday 9 July 2023, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 7 July 2023).

Five major French banks and a pension fund from the country have been accused of fueling the Myanmar junta's widespread and systematic human rights violations through their business links to the regime.

On Thursday, rights groups Justice for Myanmar (JFM), Info Birmanie and BankTrack revealed in a joint report that five commercial banks—Crédit Agricole, La Banque Postale, Groupe BPCE, BNP Paribas and Société Générale—and a publicly owned, state-funded pension fund, Fonds de réserve pour les retraites (FRR), continue to invest in 22 companies linked to the military regime.

The junta is widely accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, JFM said.

The report, endorsed by ALTSEAN-Burma, the International Federation for Human Rights and Reporters Without Borders, said the investments made by the commercial banks and the fund so far amount to over US\$6 billion—75 percent of it in the fossil fuel sector.

They have also invested in companies that sell arms to the junta and in companies operating in the telecommunications sector, which enables the junta's surveillance activities, the report said.

Of the six entities, Crédit Agricole—France's second-largest bank and the world's largest cooperative financial institution—accounted for the largest portion of the investments, with \$4 billion.

According to the report, the companies in which the six financial institutions are investors have direct and long-standing relationships with the Myanmar military—or with companies controlled by the military before the coup—or have direct business relationships with state-owned companies controlled by the junta since the coup of 2021.

In May 2021, around 19 commercial banks including Crédit Agricole were called on by BankTrack and JFM to divest from junta-linked companies.

However, the bank remains an investor in Indian state-owned company Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL), which has been implicated in the sale of military equipment to the junta since the coup attempt.

JFM said French investments and the partnership between India and France in the field of defense, should be rigorously scrutinized to prevent French institutions from helping to finance the flow of arms and technology to the junta.

“It is outrageous that these banks have still not taken adequate action to assess and cut ties with companies linked to the junta, even after their investments were exposed two years ago,” said Henrieke Butijn, climate campaigner and researcher for BankTrack.

She added, “By failing to act on their investments, these five French financiers are not only in breach of the OECD guidelines and UNGPs [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights], they are also betraying the people of Myanmar.”

JFM spokesperson Yadanar Maung also said it is unacceptable that the French banks and the pension fund continue to invest in companies with known ties to the junta, which is committing atrocities against the people of Myanmar.

“These banks must act now to ensure they are in no way supporting the junta. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, we urge France to take a firm stance against the flow of arms to the junta, including from India, and push for a global arms embargo.”

Faced with daily attacks from People’s Defense Forces (PDFs) and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) across the country, the Myanmar junta is engaging in arbitrary and indiscriminate killings of both rebels and civilians, as well burning and looting villages and conducting artillery and air strikes on residential areas across the country.

As of Thursday, 3,750 people had been killed by the junta and 23,753 others including elected government leaders had been arrested or detained since the military coup in February 2021, said the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors deaths and arrests under the regime.

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