

Burma

ASEAN's Exclusion of National Unity Government (NUG) in Summit Disappoints Myanmar

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ASEAN will hold a "special" summit on Myanmar on Saturday in Jakarta, Indonesia, seeking to resolve the deteriorating situation in the country less than three months after the Feb. 1 coup.

A call by the Myanmar's parallel National Unity Government (NUG) to be invited to the summit has been ignored, while the junta leader plans to attend the high level discussion.

During the Southeast Asia People's Summit, which was held virtually on Thursday, Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, a former upper house lawmaker and now the minister of Women, Youths and Children Affairs of the NUG, called on the ASEAN members not to recognize the coup leaders but to hear the voices of Myanmar's people.

She urged ASEAN members to work together in supporting and recognizing the NUG of Myanmar.

Myanmar observers have reiterated that call to ASEAN to listen to the people of Myanmar who are opposing the military dictatorship.



U Aung Myo Min, longtime human rights advocate and the director of Equality Myanmar

There is no doubt that the ASEAN will stick to their diplomatic approach to get on a path to negotiation. But what concerns us is that by citing ASEAN's approach, other countries would think of delaying further actions.

Our people cannot wait for a long negotiation if ASEAN says they are working as per the suggestion of the international community including China, but they are taking time. If the ASEAN members are to mediate, they must meet Myanmar's new government, the National Unity Government, and they should not meet the junta side alone.



Daw May Sabe Phyu, director of Gender Equality Network (GEN)

Knowing ASEAN's history, we know that we cannot rely on ASEAN very much. However because we are neighbors and Myanmar's current situation has become a regional issue, we are holding out hope that there will be some ASEAN leaders who will listen to the will of more than 50 million people in Myanmar. Now it is different from past experiences, of course. Also the ASEAN leaders have been saying they would respect the will of the Myanmar people. Therefore, we are watching.

However, ASEAN is neither showing support nor acknowledging the people's government, NUG. But they invited the junta leader. We are disappointed.



Dr. Tin Maung Than, a veteran political analyst

I think ASEAN would take its stand based on the issues set by the UN Security Council. If possible, they may want to mediate, but for that, Myanmar (the junta) must accept. If not, they cannot do anything. What ASEAN can do is to engage constructively. But there is risk on that and there are boundaries too. There is risk because other ASEAN members are engaging with the alleged genocide criminals of Myanmar. ASEAN must look into the "will and interests of people of Myanmar" as urged by the UNSC on Feb. 4. The people's will and interest are the opposite of the junta's plan, including holding elections with the possible marginalization of the National League for Democracy. If ASEAN neglects the people's will, the ASEAN's efforts would be just polishing the shoes of the alleged criminals of Myanmar [accused of] genocide and crimes against humanity.



Ko Tayzar San, a leading striker against the military regime

ASEAN needs to respect the will of Myanmar people and hear the voices of the 55 million population

of Myanmar. We have our civilian government, NUG, and we support it as the NUG represents the people. Senior General Min Aung Hliang is a terrorist leader and a criminal. Therefore, if the ASEAN holds talks regarding Myanmar affairs, it should not leave out the NUG. We totally object to ASEAN's decision not to invite the NUG. We, Myanmar people, respect the roles of the international community, including ASEAN and the United Nations. We understand our fight is within us, and we will continue our strikes and fight against the military coup and dictatorship. We also request the people in the ASEAN member countries to be in solidarity with the Myanmar people and to hear our voices.

Photo not available here.

U Than Soe Naing, a political analyst

ASEAN does not have enough power to solve the problem of Myanmar. But countries are pushing ASEAN. What can it do when the UN Security Council is unable to resolve Myanmar's affairs? I don't think any significant decision will come out from the ASEAN summit (on April 24). Those decisions may be regarded as objecting to the coup or calling for the release of the detained leaders and bringing them to the negotiation table.

ASEAN invited the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, but not the civilian National Unity Government. In other words, it means that the ASEAN accepts the junta's State Administrative Council but does not acknowledge the NUG. Thus the invitation is unfair.

Although I don't think ASEAN would be able to make any decision to resolve Myanmar's problem, what they might do at the very least is call for an end to the increasing violence and killing of civilians by the junta. We have seen Malaysia and Indonesia being active and taking their stands. We are hesitant to be hopeful of a change in attitude within the bloc.

Photo not available here.

U Ye Tun, a political analyst, and former lower house lawmaker from Hsipaw

We, Myanmar people, could not expect much from tomorrow's ASEAN summit, as the bloc can work only within its principles, including the non-interference policy, as stated in their charter. They would need consensus from all the member nations to even issue a statement. It is true for any bloc that is formed by different nations. They have their limitations. For their neighbor, Myanmar, they must think seriously should they push for sanctions or other actions [against the coup makers], as they have their own interests too.

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P.S.

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