

## **Myanmar at a Turning Point**

Supporting Myanmar civil society in their most critical time of need

### **Background**

---

Since the coup on February 1st, Myanmar's sociopolitical landscape has been dramatically altered. Officials elected in the Nov 2020 elections have been arrested and the military has appointed their own State Administration Council to rule the country. Opposition to the coup erupted immediately. For almost 3 months now, masses of people have been protesting and/or practicing civil disobedience by not going to work at government entities across the country. The crackdown by armed forces has been severe with over 700 civilians killed and 3000 detained (as of April 17, 2021). Night time raids, arrests and militarized attacks on neighborhoods continuing each night. Basic services around the country such as health services, banking systems and transportation are disrupted. Elected Members of Parliament and other democratic forces have created groups and alliances that have staked claim to the legitimate authority of the country, including the establishment of a new National Unity Government, and are so far succeeding in countering the military's legitimacy at the international level. The UN, ASEAN and many countries have not formally recognized the military government and have engaged directly in informal ways with the oppositional forces supported by the people.

### **Reasons to Hope**

---

Despite the seemingly desperate situation, many people in Myanmar are seeing this as a time for great transformation for their country. It is a time when previous foes are now coming together against the military. The Burman population (the ethnic and religious majority in the country) are understanding more viscerally how the military is treating minorities, such as the Rohingya who they committed genocide against in 2017. And there is now a strong feeling amongst a broader base of people to end military control once and for all and to make a federal union where the people of the diverse states will have more political autonomy and decision-making power over their lives, government services and resources. In line with this, the political opposition has announced the abolishment of the constitution that enshrined the military in the political power structure, most egregiously by having 25% seats in parliament. So they are using the chaos and pain that this coup has brought to break through the old systems, and re-imagine their country in a new light.

### **How to Help**

---

While the outcome of this fight for control of the country is resolutely dependent on the strategies and the will of the Myanmar people, international support is an important contribution that can bolster national efforts.

There are a number of local initiatives that can use immediate support. Annex 1 has a compilation of crowdfunding links, organizations that can safely publicize their work and fundraise online, as well as the type of organizations that need to do their work more privately, but can receive support through direct transfers. These are groups that I have worked with for years and I'd be able to give you a much more in depth report on the challenges they face and how your specific funds were used.

There is also the possibility that dissidents fleeing the country and seeking safe haven in the United States will need temporary hosting and support. The US government is granting an temporary immigration status called “humanitarian parole” to Myanmar activists. This will allow them to come for up to one year to the United States, before they would need to apply for asylum or go back home (if their security situation in Myanmar improves). Universities, faith communities and other community entities could likely sponsor an individual or group of individuals.

## Learn More

---

Myanmar English-language media:

- <https://myanmar-now.org/en>
- <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/>

Suggest articles, videos and links:

- Music video that starts with the news of the coup and subsequent protest footage:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NslAkKwGDY>
- Foreign policy analysis from former US Ambassador to Myanmar:  
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/burma-myanmar/2021-04-15/looming-catastrophe-myanmar>
- Intimidation and violence against humanitarian volunteers and medics
- <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-military-is-hunting-us-volunteer-medics-in-the-crosshairs/>
- Deep-dive into the psyche of the military:
  - <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/28/world/asia/myanmar-army-protests.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>
  - <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/news/myanmars-military-a-system-of-monarchs-and-slaves-defector-says>
- The artistic side of the protests:
  - <https://www.threefingers.org/artwork-collection/protest-art>
  - <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/we-will-never-kneel-down-protesters-change-tactics-in-face-of-rising-death-toll/>

## Annex 1 : Options for Financial Support

### Online Fundraising Campaigns, using Crowd-sourcing sites

*(best for: small to medium-sized donations, using credit card)*

---

Fundraising campaigns are the best way to add your donation to a larger crowd-funded effort for bigger impact. They are well suited for people who are giving smaller donations and want to feel part of a bigger group of supporters, but who do not feel the need to know exactly how the funds are being used or which organization in Myanmar is receiving the funds.

New fundraisers are popping up all the time and many have a deadline when the campaigns have to close. The best way to see which campaigns are currently going on is to check: <https://www.isupportmyanmar.com/>, which has a compilation of these online fundraisers.

Below are a few online fundraising campaigns I can personally vouch for since I know the organizers and know they are able to get money into the country. Also, they are mostly channeling support to places outside of Yangon, the main city. These more rural areas have a particularly hard time accessing support.

Support Myanmar Ethnic Minorities in CDM (Civil Disobedience Movement)

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/428353795132761/441220330512774/>

Mutual Aid Myanmar

*(donations go through a 501(c)3 fiscal sponsor making you donation tax deductible in the US)*

<https://www.mutualaidmyanmar.org/cdm-fund>

Support Civil Disobedience in Shan State, Burma

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-civil-disobedience-in-shan-state-burma>

### Online Donations directly to well-respected organizations providing cross-border support

*(best for: donations of any size, using credit card/paypal, people who would like to know the exact organization they are donating to and be able to learn about their work)*

---

While it may be too risky to send funds to organizations inside Myanmar at this time, there are well established organizations that have operated for years on the Thai border that provide essential services to the people of Myanmar both as migrants in Thailand and to mostly ethnic minority communities across the border in Myanmar.

**Healthcare:** Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)

*(Uses two 501(c)3 non-profits as fiscal sponsors so donations tax-deductible in the US.)*

<https://maetaoclinic.org/how-to-help/donate/>

Mae Tao Clinic, founded by Dr. Cynthia Maung, has been providing critical health services, including maternal and child healthcare, to the primary ethnic minority communities living in Eastern Myanmar for decades. Many communities, who do not have access to proper healthcare in Myanmar, cross the border to get the care they need at MTC. MTC has also

trained hundreds of community health care workers who operate inside the country supporting underserved communities. With the ongoing crisis, the clinic expects to have more patients and also need more support for its community health care workers's operations inside Myanmar.

**Education : BEAM**

<https://beamedu.org/donate/>

*(uses Paypal – need to convert to Thai Baht, current rate is approximately 31.22 Thai baht to 1 USD)*

BEAM Education Foundation, based in Chiang Mai, Thailand provides education and livelihood opportunities for both Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand as well as former migrants returning back to their communities. In this time of crisis, they have activated programming that will help to support urgent needs in the country as well as continued education support to, what is expected to be, an increased number of migrant workers coming to Thailand to look for work.

**Humanitarian Aid: Karen Women's Organization**

<https://karenwomen.wordpress.com/>

*(uses Paypal for donations from Paypal account of Credit/Debit Card)*

The Karen Women's Organization is a longstanding organization that supports vulnerable populations, including women and children, in areas of Karen state along the Thai-Burma border. They are a first responder organization to emergencies, especially displacement of villagers due to armed conflict and are trusted by those communities. As the Myanmar military has ramped up its

**Media: Independent Myanmar New Agencies**

Myanmar Now - <https://www.myanmar-now.org/en/donate>

Frontier Myanmar - <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/> (One time donation or sign up for their subscription service for informative, in-depth news briefs to your email inbox.)