ASEAN: Increase Pressure on Myanmar Junta to End Abuses

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(London) – World leaders gathering in the Philippines on November 15-17, 2026, should more forcefully address the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, Human Rights Watch said today. The East Asia Summit and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and partner summits will include leaders of ASEAN nations and the United States, European Union, Japan, China, and India, among other countries.

In a November 5 letter to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. of the Philippines, the ASEAN chair and summit host, Human Rights Watch urged ASEAN not to recognize or endorse the sham elections earlier in 2026 that resulted in junta leader Min Aung

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Hlaing assuming Myanmar's presidency. In recent months, several governments in ASEAN and the region have hosted Min Aung Hlaing, despite the junta's rejection of ASEAN's calls to address human rights and humanitarian issues. On November 11, the Philippine government confirmed that Min Aung Hlaing would not attend the summit. ASEAN partners should urge the bloc to continue blocking junta officials from representing Myanmar at ASEAN meetings, Human Rights Watch said.

"ASEAN could play an important role in bringing a stop to Myanmar military abuses," said John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "Governments should be increasing pressure on the junta to end its attacks on civilians, lift restrictions on humanitarian aid, and begin credible dialogues

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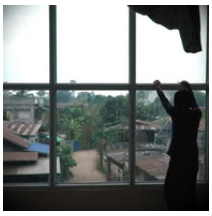

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about transitioning to civilian rule."

As commander-in-chief of Myanmar's military both before and after its 2021 military coup, Min Aung Hlaing has led numerous abusive military operations throughout the country, many including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Junta authorities have arrested more than 32,000 people for opposing military rule and at least 2,300 have reportedly died in custody. Detainees face torture and ill-treatment. Over 6,600 of those arrested have been women, and Human Rights Watch recently documented that many of them have experienced sexual violence as well as dangerous and sometimes deadly denials of prenatal and obstetric medical care.

Days after the ASEAN meetings,

on November 19, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague will deliver its judgment in the landmark case brought by Gambia against Myanmar for alleged violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Min Aung Hlaing in 2017 oversaw the sweeping campaign of massacres, rape, and arson against ethnic Rohingya in northern Rakhine State.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is investigating Min Aung Hlaing for alleged atrocity crimes. In November 2024, the ICC prosecutor's office asked judges to issue an arrest warrant against Min Aung Hlaing for his role in alleged crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution during the 2017 campaign against the Rohingya. ICC judges have yet to issue a public decision on the arrest warrant request.

During ASEAN meetings, members should focus on better addressing Myanmar's dire humanitarian and human rights situation and protecting the rights of Myanmar people, including those who have fled to neighboring countries. Human Rights Watch, in its letter to President Marcos, outlined credible steps for doing so.

"Concerned governments need to undertake tougher measures to pressure and compel Myanmar's junta to stop committing abuses and engage in real dialogue," Sifton said.

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