



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Chairman of the State Administration Council
Naypidaw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Brussels, 26th March 2021

The European Buddhist Union (EBU) is an international association of Buddhist organizations and national Buddhist unions in Europe, founded in 1975. The presence of Buddhism in all European countries has been growing considerably in the last 50 years so as to represent a number of several million Buddhists, not only through the presence of natives of traditional Buddhist countries, but mainly because an ever-increasing number of Europeans have adopted Buddhism as their philosophy of life, being inspired by the message of wisdom, altruism, open-mindedness, loving kindness and limitless compassion towards all living beings.

As the body representing Buddhists in the Member States of the European Union as well as in the Member States of the Council of Europe, the EBU engages internationally. We also have long-standing friendly relations with Buddhists in Myanmar.

As a country with a strong Buddhist tradition Myanmar and its people are very close to our hearts, whether they are Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs or any other religion as well as freethinkers. We have been encouraged by the positive developments there during the last decade that has allowed people in Myanmar to enjoy human rights and democracy in accordance with fundamental Buddhist values. Whatever the difficulties encountered Myanmar has once again come to participate in the international community and has progressed significantly in various fields.

However, we deeply regret that not all ethnic groups in Myanmar have full citizenship and especially that these last few years many thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been obliged to flee the country in order to escape violence. The Rohingya refugees should be allowed to return safely to Myanmar, be respected in their way of life and their religion and enjoy full citizenship.

It came as a great shock to us that the Tatmadaw of Myanmar on 1 February 2021 seized power deposing the country's head of State and political leaders elected according to the 2008 constitution. This action has been broadly condemned by people in Myanmar who have come out in large numbers to demonstrate against what is seen as an illegitimate coup d'État. Similarly, holding State Councillor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint incommunicado since 1 February have been widely condemned as unlawful.

We also note that distinguished Buddhist monks from prominent Buddhist monastic institutions in Myanmar have denounced these actions by the Tatmadaw as illegitimate and that they have demanded that the elected leaders are released and reinstalled in their constitutional positions.

The military intervention stopping Myanmar's peaceful development towards democracy saddens us. A fundamental human right is the right to express one's opinions. Therefore, it is deeply disturbing that unarmed civilians, exercising their right to express their disapproval of the Tatmadaw's seizure of power, have increasingly been met with police forces using sharp ammunition against them, resulting in killings of demonstrators in numbers increasing day by day. According to the latest reports, almost two hundred demonstrators have been shot dead by police forces in Myanmar.

There is no justification whatsoever for such violence by those who are responsible for maintaining law and order. We earnestly implore those who currently exercise authority to stop such violence immediately and to bring those perpetrating such misdeeds to justice. As a Buddhist organization, we are not concerned with the exercise of politics in our own or in any other country. But we are concerned with the fundamental Buddhist values of peace, non-violence, justice and human rights.

Therefore, we speak out when young people demonstrating in the streets are being killed, therefore we speak out when democratically elected leaders are held in detention and when thousands of innocent people, including respected Buddhist monks, are being imprisoned. This unacceptable situation must end. On Buddhist grounds as well as from the point of view of the rule of law and respect of human rights, we expect from those in power in Myanmar to stop killing unarmed civilians, without making any difference between Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs or followers of any other religion or philosophy, to release unlawfully imprisoned civilians and to restore to their constitutional positions democratically elected leaders.

Yours sincerely,



Ron Eichhorn
President of the European Buddhist Union