

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Interactive Dialogue on the Report of the Independent International Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar

11 September 2023

The head of the Independent International Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, Mr. Nicholas Koumjian, affirmed that the frequency and intensity of war crimes and crimes against humanity have increased in recent months. The quantity of evidence and information the Mechanism has been able to collect in the past year from individuals and organizations is unprecedented and unanticipated. With this increased workload and the limited resources, the Mechanism has had to strategically focus investigations on the gravest crimes where the impact on victims has been the most severe, including sexual gender-based crimes.

He referred to the innovative technology to propel investigations. The Open-Source team uses cutting-edge technology to analyze and verify large quantities of material, such as videos, photographs, and other information posted on social media. The Mechanism is also using geospatial imagery to determine damage to villages before and after attacks. This type of evidence is then cross-checked against the information received from at least 700 sources, including more than 200 eyewitness accounts. It has also begun a dedicated inquiry into financial information related to entities and individuals that have contributed to or benefitted from, the serious international crimes committed in Myanmar. We are looking at weapon supply chains, and the dispossession of land, homes, and businesses, particularly during the clearance operations in Rakhine State.

The head of the Mechanism also stressed that Myanmar people are suffering deeply from the effects of these ongoing horrific crimes, and the Mechanism is committed to pursuing justice for them and focusing all efforts to ensure that the perpetrators will one day be held to account.

Interactive dialogue

32 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. The majority of the countries strongly condemned the military coup and were alarmed that the number of incidents bearing the hallmarks of international crimes has only increased. They called an immediate halt to the use of violence against civilians. They also called on the Country to create the conditions for a safe and dignified return of Rohingya to Myanmar. **Malaysia and Pakistan** thanked Bangladesh and other host countries for their continued support of the Mechanism, including facilitating its visits to the region. Along with **Canada**, called upon Myanmar and other States not to destroy any evidence and to continue to cooperate fully and meaningfully.

China regretted that the Country concerned could not participate in this interactive dialogue. Relevant discussion at the HRC should help stability and development. It called the international community to put the interests of the Myanmar people first and play a constructive role in de-escalating the Myanmar situation. It affirmed its support and assistance on Bangladesh and Myanmar consultation in the Rohingya issue. **Russian Federation** called on all political forces in Myanmar to exercise restraint and avoid steps that lead to an escalation of violence and polarization of public sentiment. An important precondition for national reconciliation is the ceasefire imposed unilaterally by the Myanmar authorities. Moreover, it negatively assessed the desire of individual countries to use multilateral platforms to politicize the issue of the human rights situation in Myanmar and make its discussion confrontational. Such a policy only increases contradictions and undermines efforts to find constructive forms of international assistance to this country.

UNICEF recognized the increasingly challenging environment in which the Mechanism operates. Children are bearing the brunt of the crisis. Grave child rights violations verified by the UN continue to rise. It welcomed the Mechanism's commitment to investigating sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against children as a high priority. Myanmar is contaminated with landmines and unexploded ordnance, being used by parties to the conflict. Children make up 20 percent of the 556 casualties reported.

NGOs affirmed that the creation of the IIMM has been an important step by this Council to strengthen its efforts for justice and accountability for crimes committed since the illegal military coup in February 2021, including crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the Myanmar military and its affiliates. They also have been tracking attacks on civic space including the torture, sexual violence and killings of political and human rights activists in detention, as also documented by the IIMM. NGOs also urged the IIMM to better support Myanmar human rights organisations on investigative standards, tools, and techniques. The **Southeast Asia Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Caucus (ASC), Inc.** focused on the sexual and gender-based violence faced by the transgender (hijra) Rohingya community. The contribution of LGBTQ human rights defenders in restoring democracy cannot be underestimated.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (32 country delegations):

Finland, Egypt, Luxembourg, Costa Rica, Belgium, Netherlands, France, USA, Japan, Türkiye, Malta, China, Malawi, Canada, Malaysia, Indonesia, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Bangladesh, Australia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Venezuela, Mauritania, Gambia, Republic Islamic of Iran, Bulgaria, Belarus, EU, Pakistan, Liechtenstein.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

CIVICUS, Centre for Civil and Political Rights, Southeast Asia Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Caucus, Inc., International Lawyers.Org, Christian Solidarities Worldwide, Iuventum e.V., International Bar Association, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, ICJ, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada.

International organizations (1): UNICEF.

To watch the full meeting refer to the [UN WEB TV](#).