



Press Release

Civil society welcomes the decision of GANHRI Global body recommends the removal of the accreditation status of the junta’s Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

[5 December 2023] The CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar) (Working Group) and the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) welcome the decision by the largest network of national human rights institutions (NHRIs), recommending the removal of the accreditation status of Myanmar military junta’s Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). The groups call on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions’ Sub-Committee on Accreditation (GANHRI-SCA) to maintain its recommendation despite the MNHRC’s attempts to challenge its decision.

The decision is unprecedented as the GANHRI [amended its statute](#) in March 2023 to enable ‘B’ status NHRIs to be subject to a Special Review if the circumstances of the accredited NHRI may have changed in a way that affects its compliance with the Paris Principles. Myanmar junta’s human rights commission – the MNHRC – is one of the first commissions to be recommended for removal since the amendments came into effect, alongside Russia’s NHRI.

In its decision, the SCA [stated](#) that it “considers that the MNHRC is operating in a manner that seriously compromises its independence and/or effectiveness as an accredited NHRI in partial compliance with the Paris Principles.”

In accordance with the GANHRI Statute, the military junta’s human rights commission has been given a year’s time “to provide the evidence necessary to establish its partial compliance with the Paris Principles.” Russia’s NHRI has also been given a year to respond. In the interim, the MNHRC has challenged the decision of the GANHRI-SCA.

While this decision was a step in the right direction, this additional time is concerning as this is akin to ‘flogging a dead horse’. The MNHRC, which has always served as a smokescreen for the military since its establishment, has had ample time – nearly three years since the military’s attempted coup in 2021 – to stand with the people of Myanmar and uphold human rights and democracy by acting in accordance with the Paris Principles as it is mandated to do.

The MNHRC has repeatedly demonstrated that it is an institution which has “been subsumed under military control” as [noted](#) by the United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and lacks independence as a functioning NHRI. Therefore, allowing a one-year period for the MNHRC to establish proof of its partial compliance will only allow the Myanmar military junta to continue to enjoy its impunity; allow the MNHRC to cover up the junta’s mass atrocity crimes, and remain a propaganda mouthpiece for the junta; and enable the military-controlled MNHRC to continue to

participate in human rights forums and retain its membership of regional and international NHRI networks.

In addition, the GANHRI-SCA encourages the MNHRC “to continue to actively engage with the OHCHR, GANHRI, APF, other NHRIs, as well as relevant stakeholders at international, regional, and national levels to strengthen its institutional framework and working methods.” However, encouraging and allowing this proxy of the military to engage with sub-regional, regional, and international NHRI bodies and the OHCHR only further risks the international community’s complicity and their turning a blind eye to the illegitimate military junta’s relentless crimes. Such human rights bodies must take an unequivocal principled stance against the illegitimate junta and its bodies.

This long-awaited decision comes after nearly three years of tireless efforts and repeated calls by the Working Group, ANNI, and their local, regional, and international partners. This also included a joint civil society [submission](#) to the GANHRI-SCA in June 2023 ahead of its Special Review of the Myanmar military junta’s national human rights commission.

Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice said: “The GANHRI-SCA’s decision to remove the accreditation status of the MNHRC is welcome, but we are disheartened by its recommendation to the MNHRC to continue its engagement with the APF and other NHRI bodies.

“This raises serious concerns as to the effectiveness and reliability of the global NHRI body to stand on the principles of human rights overall, with the Paris Principles as its foundation. The military junta-controlled MNHRC will never be independent, impartial, or effective as it has proved itself over the past decade and especially over the past two years as it aligned itself with the military that has committed genocide against Rohingya and crimes against humanity and war crimes against other ethnic communities.”

Mary Aileen D. Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA, the Secretariat of ANNI said: “While we welcome the GANHRI-SCA’s recommendation to remove the accreditation status of the Myanmar junta-controlled MNHRC, the additional year given to this institution to provide evidence and establish partial compliance with the Paris Principles, is disheartening. The MNHRC’s consistent apathy and utter failure to perform its mandate in the face of grave human rights violations in Myanmar since the attempted military coup in 2021 has been amply documented, and its continued presence in, and membership of, sub-regional, regional, and international NHRI bodies like the SEANF, APF, and GANHRI, sends a concerning message about the legitimacy provided to such an institution in human rights networks.

“With our members in Myanmar, we remain steadfast in our call to establish an independent, legitimate, and effective NHRI in Myanmar that expresses the will of the people, and in our commitment to advocate with GANHRI, APF, and SEANF for ensuring an accountable NHRI.”

Thinzar Shunlei Yi from the Working Group said: “The decision of the GANHRI-SCA to recommend the removal of the accreditation status of the MNHRC has been our long-awaited demand. We urge GANHRI to maintain its recommendation despite the MNHRC’s feeble attempt to challenge its decision. We will continue to monitor the MNHRC and repeat our calls to the GANHRI, APF and SEANF to immediately suspend their engagement with the MNHRC, and to remove the MNHRC from those global, regional bodies that are meant to protect and promote human rights.

“Civil society organizations are working with the National Unity Government (NUG) to establish a NHRI that is fully-compliant with the Paris Principles. GANHRI, APF, and SEANF must be prepared to support a new human right commission set up by the legitimate government, the NUG, in accordance with the Union Human Right Commission law.”

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About the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI currently has 33 member organisations from 21 countries or territories. ANNI members work on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI). The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) has served as the Secretariat of ANNI since its establishment in 2006.

Website: <http://l.forum-asia.org/ANNI>

About the CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar)

The CSO Working Group on Independent National Human Rights Institution (Burma/Myanmar) advocates for the establishment of a new NHRI – tentatively named the Union Human Rights Commission – to replace the illegitimate MNHRC which has aligned itself with the illegal military junta. The Working Group was previously known as ‘CSO Working Group on MNHRC Reform;’ currently, it consists of 20 Myanmar Civil Society Organizations. From its founding in 2019 until the attempted coup in February 2021, the Working Group consistently advocated for an effective MNHRC that demonstrated a commitment to the international standards set forth in the Paris Principles.

More information at <https://www.facebook.com/WGonNHRIBurma>