

Human Rights Council organisational meeting: UK statement

We have convened this special session, alongside the European Union, with the support of over 20 other Council members. We are grateful for the support of Council members, the President and the Secretariat in making this session possible.

Madam President – we have spoken about our concerns about the human rights situation in Myanmar in the Council on many occasions in regular and in Special Sessions. Our longstanding concerns remain, including about the situation in Rakhine state and of the massive-scale-violations committed against Rohingya Muslims and members of other minorities. We are alarmed by concerned by a recent increase in violence in Kachin, Shan and particularly Kayin, where the Tatmadaw has repeatedly violated the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in recent months.

But our reason for calling for this special session is due to the extremely serious events which have unfolded in Myanmar over the last 10 days.

In the early hours of the 1st of February, Myanmar's military seized power in a coup and detained State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, as well as other members of the democratically elected government and civil society. A state of emergency has been declared.

Since the military launched their coup, numerous human rights violations and abuses have been documented. These include but are not limited to arbitrary detention, restriction of access to communications, and restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to protest. There has been violence against peaceful protestors. Mass protests continue, the risk of further abuses of human rights remains high. The draft cyber security law raises the spectre of a further clamp down on freedom of expression and access to information.

The Security Council met on the 4th of February and unanimously agreed a statement which stressed the need for human rights to be fully respected. The Security Council also stressed the need to uphold democracy, refrain from further violence and allow safe and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Efforts to urge the Myanmar military to reverse the coup, restore democracy and respect human rights have not yielded results.

As the UN's principal human rights body, it is now essential that the Human Rights Council responds with due attention to the human rights emergency which is unfolding in the country.

In its founding resolution, this Council has a clear duty to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights.

Therefore, given the imminent and ongoing threat to human rights in Myanmar

is it essential that we convene a Special Session on the human rights implications of the crisis in Myanmar, and seek a resolution responding to the concerns of Council members and observers.

We hope that all delegations will take part in the session and that the Council will support a resolution tomorrow to express our common concerns. We will continue to work with all delegations to this end.

Thank you