



31 January 2023

Joint Statement by International Election Experts and Organizations on Myanmar

We, the undersigned organizations specializing in election observation, electoral and democracy assistance, committed to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation¹ and to upholding the integrity and credibility of such endeavours, denounce and distance ourselves from the sham “election” that the illegal and illegitimate military junta of Myanmar, the State Administrative Council (SAC), and the illegitimate “Union Election Commission” it has established, are currently planning for later this year.

We also express an urgent request to the international community to deny the SAC any technical, material, or symbolic support for such sham elections. We encourage UN Member States to join us and make their opposition to the junta’s electoral exercise widely known, including through individual and joint statements, and resolutions at the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, and the UN Human Rights Council.

The Myanmar junta has been systematically and massively violating the human rights of the people to such a degree that the free expression of their will cannot be ensured. It is impossible to hold a genuine election under current conditions in Myanmar, which include the arrest, detention, torture, and execution of leaders of the most widely supported political party and other politicians and civic activists; as well as the harassment, jailing and torture of journalists. Those who criticize the coup and the military junta and protect the internationally recognized valid elections of 2020 are considered criminals and are persecuted. It should also be noted that 21 officials from the legitimate Union Election Commission are still being held in detention following the coup as a result of their involvement in the 2020 elections.² Genuine democratic elections cannot be achieved unless human rights and fundamental freedoms can be exercised, including freedom of expression, assembly, and association, as was largely the case in 2020. The evidence is overwhelming that the SAC denies the exercise of any of these freedoms.

Genuine democratic elections are an expression of sovereignty, which belongs to the people of a country, the free expression of whose will provides the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government. The SAC can make no claim to democratic legitimacy, i.e., representing the will of the people as expressed through elections.

Our organizations are committed to conducting systematic, comprehensive, and accurate gathering of information concerning the laws, processes and institutions related to the conduct of elections. We assess factors concerning the overall electoral environment. We analyze this information impartially and draw conclusions about the character of electoral processes based on the highest standards for accuracy of information and impartiality of analysis. Where possible, we offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of electoral processes. No recommendations that we could offer on this sham “election” could cure the falsity of the process other than for the SAC to follow the call of the United Nations General Assembly to “to respect the will of the people as freely expressed by the results of the general election of 8 November 2020, to end the state of emergency, to respect all human rights of all the people of Myanmar and to allow the sustained democratic transition of Myanmar.” The implementation of a sham “election” will not bring stability in Myanmar. It will only contribute to increasing violence and polarization, worsen the crisis caused by the military coup, and further threats to regional and international stability and security.

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL)

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

International Republican Institute (IRI)

The signatories invite other organisations, institutions and associations upholding the Declaration of Principles to join this statement and disseminate it widely.

¹ The Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, 27 October 2005, was adopted under the auspices of the UN Secretary General. <https://electionstandards.cartercenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Declaration-and-Code-English-revised.pdf>

² Assistance Association for Political Prisoners’ documentation <https://aappb.org/?p=23952>