

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

Ref.: AL THA 9/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

12 September 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 58/20.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information I have received concerning **the Royal Thai Air Force's engagement with Myanmar military officials, including an offer to exchange knowledge on the development of unmanned aerial vehicles.**

According to the information received:

On 30 July 2025, the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Punpakdee Pattanakul hosted the Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Air Force, General Htun Aung, at the headquarters of the Royal Thai Air Force.

In a social media post, the Royal Thai Air Force announced that the two commanders discussed topics including security cooperation, exchange visits, training and humanitarian assistance. According to the post, the Air Chief Marshal offered to provide seats in an air force training program to members of the Myanmar Air Force. He also offered to exchange knowledge on the development of unmanned aerial vehicles.

According to Myanmar state media, on 4 and 5 August 2025, a Royal Thai Air Force "exchange delegation and entertainment troupe" visited Myanmar. The delegation reportedly exchanged gifts with Myanmar Air Force officials, conducted a performance at an air base, and visited civilian and military sites.

While I do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, I am extremely concerned about the Royal Thai Air Force's recent engagements with the Myanmar Air Force.

As described in my reports to the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly, Myanmar's military junta is responsible for widespread and systematic attacks on civilians.¹ These attacks include airstrikes and drone attacks on civilian populations and infrastructure, including villages, displacement camps, schools, hospitals, clinics and public markets. Attacks carried out by the Myanmar Air Force likely constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes under international criminal law.

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to the UN General Assembly, UN Doc. A/79/550, 25 October 2024; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to the UN Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/58/64, 14 March 2025.

In June 2021, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 75/287 calling on UN Member States to “prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar”.² In line with this recommendation, I have reported extensively on the governments and arms-dealing networks that have supplied the Myanmar military with weapons and military supplies.³ I have specifically engaged the Royal Thai Government concerning the use of its jurisdiction and financial institutions to supply the Myanmar military. The suggestion that the Royal Thai Air Force would provide any form of assistance to or knowledge-sharing with the Myanmar Air Force concerning the development of unmanned aerial vehicle technology is extremely worrying.

More broadly, I have highlighted the Myanmar military junta’s lack of democratic and constitutional legitimacy.⁴ I have called on States to avoid actions or statements that could suggest the junta’s legitimacy or international acceptance and to take steps to diplomatically isolate the junta.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandate provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to my attention, I would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information concerning any military training programs that involve the participation of or will in the future will be made available to, Myanmar military officers, including the Royal Thai Air Force training program referenced in the social media post by the Royal Thai Air Force.
3. Please provide further information concerning the Royal Thai Air Force’s planned knowledge-sharing on unmanned aerial vehicles or any other support, instruction or cooperation with the Myanmar military in the development of military technology.
4. Please provide information concerning future plans for direct military-to-military engagement between the Myanmar military and Royal Thai Armed Forces.

² UN General Assembly Resolution 75/287, UN Doc. A/RES/75/287, adopted 18 June 2021.

³ “Enabling Atrocities: UN Member States’ Arms Transfers to the Myanmar Military,” UN Doc. A/HRC/49/CRP.1, 22 February 2022; “The Billion Dollar Death Trade: The International Arms Networks that Enable Human Rights Violations in Myanmar,” UN Doc. A/HRC/53/CRP.2, 17 May 2023; “Banking on the Death Trade: How Banks and Governments Enable the Military Junta in Myanmar,” UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.7, 26 June 2024.

⁴ “Illegal and Illegitimate: Examining the Myanmar military’s claim as the Government of Myanmar and the international response,” UN Doc. A/HRC/52/CRP.2, 31 January 2023.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, I urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Thomas Andrews
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, I would like to draw your attention to applicable international human rights norms and standards.

The involvement of Myanmar military personnel in military training programs and knowledge-sharing or other assistance relating to unarmed aerial vehicles are likely to contribute to the violation of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by Thailand in 1996, as well as other human rights instruments. In its ongoing attacks on civilian populations throughout the country, the Myanmar military has violated the right to life, liberty, and security of person (UDHR, article 3; ICCPR, articles 6 and 9); the prohibition against slavery, servitude or forced labor (UDHR, article 4; ICCPR, article 8) the prohibition against torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (UDHR, article 5; ICCPR, article 7); the prohibition against arbitrary arrest, detention or exile (UDHR, article 9; ICCPR, article 8); and the right to freedom of movement and residence (UDHR, article 13; ICCPR, article 11), among other rights. Additionally, the Myanmar military's coup and failure to respect the will of the Myanmar people as expressed in the November 2020 general elections violate the right to take part in government and freely choose representatives (UDHR, article 21; ICCPR, article 25). Both the UDHR and ICCPR commit Member States to promoting "universal respect" for human rights.

Many of the above-described human rights violations have been committed in the context of a widespread and systematic attack on the people of Myanmar and therefore likely constitute crimes against humanity under international criminal law. The situation in many parts of the country constitute non-international armed conflict, and, therefore, some human rights violations perpetrated by the military may constitute war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law, including violations of common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

Common article 1 to the Four Geneva Conventions requires States to "undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances."⁵ The International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) authoritative commentary on article 1 further explains that Member States must "neither encourage, nor aid or assist in violations of the Conventions" and must "opt out of a specific operation if there is an expectation, based on facts or knowledge of past patterns, that it would violate the Conventions, as this would constitute aiding or assisting violations."⁶ Providing training, knowledge or technical assistance to the Myanmar Air Force, including on the development of unmanned aerial vehicles, may therefore constitute a violation of the Geneva Conventions, given the Myanmar Air Force's past pattern of conduct.

⁵ Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, Geneva, 12 August 1949, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.30_GC-IEN.pdf.

⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross, Commentary of 2016, Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, Geneva, 12 August 1949, article 1: Respect for the Convention, International Committee of the Red Cross, para. 158 and 161, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-1/commentary/2016#83_B

Article 16 of the International Law Commission’s (ILC) draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts states, “a State which aids or assists another State in the commission of an internationally wrongful act by the latter is internationally responsible for doing so if: (a) that State does so with knowledge of the circumstances of the internationally wrongful act; and (b) the act would be internationally wrongful if committed by that State.”⁷ “Internationally wrongful act[s],” include, but are not limited to, crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes.⁸ The Myanmar military has been credibly accused of committing all of these “internationally wrongful acts.”

I would also like to make reference to my January 2023 Conference Room Paper (A/HRC/52/CRP.2) that provided thorough legal analysis demonstrating Myanmar’s military junta has no legitimate claim to be the government of Myanmar.⁹

According to international law, the junta has failed to meet two core doctrines that have informed the formal recognition of governments since World War II: (1) the effective control standard and (2) the legitimacy standard. The junta has not met the three common criteria of “effective control”: it does not (a) enjoy “with a reasonable prospect of permanence, the obedience of the mass of the population,” (b) control the greater part of Myanmar’s territory, or (c) comply with obligations under international law.

As for the legitimacy standard, the junta overthrew the legitimate representatives of the people of Myanmar as expressed through democratic elections relying on baseless claims of widespread election fraud as justification. The junta also failed to comply with its own standards of legitimacy by failing to adhere to the requirements of the 2008 constitution that it drafted, including criteria for the imposition of a state of emergency.

⁷ Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its fifty-third session, U.N. Doc. A/56/10, 23 April – 1 June and 2 July – 10 August 2001, Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth session, Supplement No.10, Draft Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, art. 16 (2001), https://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/reports/a_56_10.pdf.

⁸ Ibid., commentary to art. 15, para. 2 at 62 (citing genocide, crimes against humanity, and other “composite acts” that, through a series of aggregated actions constitute an international wrongful act).

⁹ “Illegal and Illegitimate: Examining the Myanmar military’s claim as the Government of Myanmar and the international response,” UN Doc. A/HRC/52/CRP.2, 31 January 2023.