

Wednesday 15 September 2021

Morrison Government must not recognise Myanmar military dictatorship at UN General Assembly

The Morrison Government must support the end of the military junta and the return of democracy to the people of Myanmar. This includes the recognition of the National Unity Government (NUG) as the true representatives of the people of Myanmar, and not the military junta, at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly which convenes this week. The ACTU is joining unions around the world today on the UN International Day for Democracy to support the recognition of the NUG.

The NUG is the democratically elected government of Myanmar, which was ousted by the military in a coup in February. The junta is responsible for over 1000 civilian deaths.

The military junta are attacking and repressing trade unionists and workers, with trade union leaders being arrested, hunted, and driven into hiding. Sixteen trade unions and labour rights organisations have been outlawed. Over 300,000 workers have been dismissed for peacefully protesting and striking against the military. The coup and COVID-19 have pushed more than 25 million people into poverty.

Australia is shamefully out of step with international efforts to end military rule in Myanmar. While the USA, UK and EU have all implemented sanctions against the coup leaders and military linked businesses, the Morrison Government is looking to deepen its ties by pushing ahead with ratification of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade agreement.

The Government introduced the enabling bill for RCEP into Parliament on 1 September and is expected to be debated when Parliament resumes in October. The ACTU reiterates its call for the Morrison Government to renegotiate the RCEP agreement to address a number of flaws, and to not ratify RCEP with Myanmar until democratic rule is restored.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“The Prime Minister must use Australia’s position at the UN General Assembly to recognise a democratically elected government, and not a military junta which has killed over 1000 civilians since the coup.

“The Morrison Government is dangerously out of step with the rest of the world – while the USA, UK and EU have implemented sanctions against the military leaders and businesses, the Morrison Government has failed to implement sanctions and is instead deepening ties by pushing ahead with the RCEP trade agreement with the military junta – in turn legitimising the regime.

“25 million people are now living in absolute poverty in Myanmar due to the military coup and COVID 19 – it is critical that Australia shows leadership in the region and stands up for democracy rather than legitimising the military junta.

“The Australian union movement stands in solidarity with the trade union movement in Myanmar who are resisting the military dictatorship. They are calling on the international community to support their struggle for democracy through the implementation of sanctions and recognition of the NUG – it’s well past time the Morrison Government took meaningful action to support the people of Myanmar.”

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