Distinguished members of the Dutch House of Representatives,

My name is Khin Ohmar, founder and chairperson of the Advisory Board of Progressive Voice. Progressive Voice is a Myanmar human rights research and advocacy organization and works in partnership with civil society organizations across Myanmar.

Myanmar is on the brink of becoming a failed state. This is a direct result of Myanmar military’s unlawful coup attempt on February 1, 2021, and the cumulative effects of decades of merciless civil war waged on the ethnic borderlands of Myanmar by the same military against ethnic minorities. A complete lack of domestic and international accountability for these abuses and others, past and present, has emboldened the Myanmar military to commit atrocity crimes without fear of repercussions.

Since the coup attempt on 1 February 2021, 824 people including 53 children have been brutally killed, 5,408 have been arrested and 1,841 warrants for arrest have been issued against peaceful protesters and supporters who are fighting for democracy. For the 4,301 who remain in detention, the situation is dire with credible reports of routine torture, murder, assaults, interrogations, deprivation of food and water, and women and LGBTQI+ people experiencing sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of police and military personnel. The dead bodies of those who have been arbitrarily arrested have been returned to families with organs missing. The military have even held dead bodies hostage, demanding the families pay money in order to retrieve the bodies of their relatives. In the streets, the military junta continues to indiscriminately kill unarmed peaceful protesters and pro-democracy activists with assault rifles, snipers, machineguns, hand grenades and rocket propelled grenades to inflict maximum harm, on orders from their superiors to shoot to kill. In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar had already indicated that these acts of murder, enforced disappearances, persecution, torture and violations of fundamental rules of international law likely amounts to crimes against humanity.

While the junta terrorizes protesters in the streets and civilians in their homes, they continue to commit war crimes through indiscriminate air strikes and shelling, on multiple fronts and in multiple States, including Karen, Karenni and Chin States. There have been nearly 1,600 attacks that targeted or harmed civilians in the first three months of the coup alone. In Karen State, at least 70,000 people have been displaced since December 2020 due to ongoing indiscriminate attacks and airstrikes and mortar shelling attacks since end of March by the Myanmar military. Villages and schools have been targeted with more than 30 killed, with children among the dead. Thousands have attempted to flee across the border to Thailand seeking safety, with many being turned away at the border.

In Mindat, Chin State, the junta has declared martial law and has conducted heavy air and ground assaults, shooting civilians on sight and using them as human shields as it took siege of the town. More than 10,000 people have fled Mindat as the junta cuts food, electricity and water to villagers trapped in conflict, while women and girls have reportedly been sexually assaulted and raped. Military are conducting similar assaults against civilians in Karenni State where the military have used tanks, helicopters and mortar to attacks Demoso, Loikaw and Moe Byae. Junta troops also shot at and shelled a church in Loikaw that was offering sanctuary to those fleeing the violence, including women, children and the elderly. Eight were killed and many more injured. Such acts are in grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. These systematic violations of human rights against ethnic nationalities are being committed at an alarming rate, including in Kachin and Shan States. These acts are indicative of the military junta’s *modus operandi*, to clear through areas, wreaking havoc on civilians without any respect for human dignity.

For many in protracted displacement in internal displacement camps, their already dire circumstances have been compounded by the coup and conflict. For internally displaced persons (IDP), such as Rohingya in Rakhine State who are living in apartheid conditions akin to an open-air prison, people are calling out for adequate food, water, healthcare, protections from Covid-19. Dwindling aid and breaks in the flow of aid due to the coup and conflict has resulted in untold suffering. Despite these overwhelming daily threats on their lives, the people of Myanmar continue to oppose the military junta. Within the Civil Disobedience Movement and within the wider Spring Revolution, students, workers, teachers, health workers, bank employees, government administrative staff, and even some police and military officers have been steadfast in their refusal of the illegitimate junta. We must lend support to these people in their defense of democracy and quest for a genuine federal democratic Myanmar.

In order for the military junta’s tyranny to be halted, the international community must isolate them financially through targeted sanctions and severing ties with the military and military-linked businesses. Dutch investors, including pension funds, must divest from businesses linked to the Myanmar military.  Additionally, and of paramount importance, is the continued support for civil society organizations on the ground and for cross border aid to be distributed to vulnerable communities and people with acute needs, including medical supplies, food, water, shelter and Covid-19 safeguards.

These are the concrete steps the Dutch government can take to support the people of Myanmar:

1. Reject the illegitimate military junta and instead recognize and support the people’s elected representative government, the National Unity Government;
2. Pressure the military junta to immediately cease the terror campaign against the peoples of Myanmar and release all those detained immediately and unconditionally.
3. Suspend development aid towards the military junta and shift the aid to cross border community-based service provider organizations without ties to the junta and support community initiatives in a people-centered, rights-based, and conflict-sensitive way for effective and sustainable solutions.
4. Continue to stand with and support the principled and rights based civil society organizations in Myanmar to strengthen communities and build stronger networks, resiliency, democratization, and peace, and provide direct and increased aid to vulnerable communities throughout the country, especially in ethnic areas to combat Covid-19, food and water shortages and temporary shelter.
5. Sanction the Myanmar military’s leadership and military businesses, including state-owned timber and gems companies, as well as Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE);
6. Dutch companies should sever ties with military businesses and those affiliated with the military, including pushing Dutch Pension Funds to divest their interests in military affiliated businesses;
7. For the Dutch government and the EU to halt all arms sales and transfers to Myanmar, and unify the international community in brokering a global arms embargo; and
8. Join efforts calling on the UN Security Council to refer the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

Thank you for inviting me to give this statement and for the Dutch government's continued and enduring support of the people of Myanmar. Also, we are most grateful for the Dutch government support of the Genocide Convention case taken by the Gambia at the International Court of Justice. I eagerly anticipate the discussion and hope we find solutions to alleviate the suffering of the people of Myanmar from this military tyranny and to help Myanmar establish federal democracy that is the collective aspiration for their future.