



[The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Agrees to Exclude Myanmar's Military Junta Leader from a Key Summit Later This Month](#)

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has formed a consensus to exclude Myanmar military junta leader Min Aung Hlaing from an upcoming ASEAN summit later this month. Rights activists have praised the bloc for taking a strong stance against the repressive dictator and his regime, with some advocates highlighting the move as a major breakthrough for positive diplomacy and the array of anti-junta voices. Others have also pointed out the important effect it has on depriving the Myanmar military junta of its attempts to garner international legitimacy – something that it had been hoping to achieve in order to try and discourage internal resistance within the country. In the past, ASEAN has been criticized for seemingly not doing enough to pressure the junta, but this week's firm action has been commended by impartial analysts as a noteworthy measure to punish the regime and harm its standing on the world diplomatic stage.

The military junta, under chief Min Aung Hlaing, took control of the nation during a coup against the democratically-elected government back in February of this year – with Hlaing proclaiming himself the indefinite caretaker. Mass protests and opposition to the move erupted across Myanmar, with the junta brutally and repressively cracking down on its own citizens. To date, monitoring groups and rights organizations estimate that more than 1,000 civilians have been killed by security forces, with thousands more arbitrarily arrested. Thus, due to these alarming and disturbing figures, ASEAN has made it clear that their decision to exclude the junta from the upcoming summit at the end of this month is a necessary step to maintain the organization's credibility and its dedication to the protection of human rights. The junta, on the other hand, has tried to argue that ASEAN's decision was made as a result of foreign pressure from the United States and the European Union – despite the fact that it is ultimately prominent regional leaders in Southeast Asia that have emphatically agreed amongst themselves to take this course of action.

Myanmar has dealt with considerable unrest since the coup. The nation's military has engaged in what has been declared by the United Nations as a genocide against the Rohingya – a Muslim minority in the northern section of the country. As such, international condemnation by advocacy groups against this behavior and the repressive crackdown against pro-democracy citizens has tarnished the junta's reputation globally. During the coup, the detainment of previous leader Aung San Suu Kyi sparked large-scale protests and led to a brutal crackdown with the military dictatorship killing, kidnapping, and unjustly imprisoning massive numbers of civilians – a blatant violation of international law and human rights. Additionally, the unstable conditions in Myanmar have hurt the nation's economy due in part to heavy sanctions against the ruling junta.

The decision by ASEAN to exclude the Myanmar junta has hurt the military regime's quest for international legitimacy. Their aim to participate in the bloc was the new government's intended first step in gaining a seat on the world stage. Now, however, it appears as though ASEAN has created a major roadblock for the junta. Rights advocates hope that continued pressure and pushback like this will force the military government to abide by international standards for fear of being totally shunned by the global community.