

Netherlands-Myanmar Solidarity Platform  
Stichting Nederlands Myanmar Solidariteitsplatform

Annual Report 2023

June 2024





## Introduction

On 1 February 2021 a coup d'état by the army made an end to the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar. The population has not accepted this. The military violently oppresses the population, including through airstrikes, killings of people and burning down villages.

Meanwhile, the military has lost control over many parts of the country, further supporting the case for recognition of the National Unity Government (NUG), set up by the democratically elected lawmakers in hiding after the coup. By the end of 2022, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first Resolution (nr. 2669) on Myanmar since 1948, expressing deep concern at the “ongoing state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021 and its grave impact on the people of Myanmar” and at the “violence across the country, and attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including educational, health and energy infrastructure and facilities, and attacks on businesses and public properties”. It condemned the military’s execution of pro-democracy activists, urged the military to “immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners,” including deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and demanded an “immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the country.”<sup>1</sup>

During the second year of military coup, violence escalated tremendously in Myanmar leaving subjecting citizens to daily terror and human rights abuses. The Netherlands Myanmar Solidarity Platform continued to stay up-to-date with political development in Myanmar, while engaging with the Myanmar diaspora community in the Netherlands and advocating for Myanmar’s democratic movement to public policy makers in the Netherlands and the rest of the world.

## Netherlands Myanmar Solidarity Platform

After the establishment of the Netherlands Myanmar Solidarity Platform in 2021 in response to the coup, 2023 was our second full year of operation.

In the Articles of Association (“Statuten”) the official purpose of the Platform Foundation is defined as:

- a. *promoting an inclusive, federal, democratic rule of law in Myanmar where the human rights of all Myanmar people are respected.*
- b. *the performance of all further acts, related to the pursuance, directly or indirectly, of the above objective.*

*The Foundation shall endeavour to achieve its objective by:*

- *supporting, financially or otherwise, organizations, groups and individuals in Myanmar who are committed to this goal;*
- *lobbying, anywhere in the world, for this purpose;*
- *mobilizing support and raising funds to achieve the goal;*
- *research and publications that support the goal.*

In the Initial Plan 2021 - 2022 we formulated the following vision for the platform:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/N2276733.pdf>

*We strive for a platform that, through the efforts of a dynamic community of volunteers and coordination by a small bureau, provides effective support to people and groups in Myanmar who stand up for an inclusive, federal democracy.*

Institutional and private donations enabled us to undertake several activities described in this report, which focussed on supporting small pro-democracy groups in Myanmar.

## Platform activities 2023

### Outreach

#### Public events

On 29 January we hosted a large event in De Sering (big thanks to them!) in Amsterdam at the occasion of two year military coup, which was attended by around 100 people. The main speaker, through video link, was the NUG Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Zin Mar Aung. Other speakers included the Board members Frank van der Valk and Sai Sam Kham.

Later in the year, we were very happy that the 2023 Geuzenpenning was awarded – complete justified – to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). We were honoured to contribute a presentation to the Geuzenpenning Symposium and attend the Award Ceremony in March.

#### Advocacy

In relation to two years coup in Myanmar, we sent letters to the Dutch Ministers of Foreign Affairs and for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to call for more support to Myanmar's democracy movement, in particular to support NUG and more sanctions against the military regime.

In anticipation of the official visit of Members of the Dutch Parliament to Bangladesh, we drafted a briefing note on the Rohingya situation together with the Free Rohingya Coalition and informed the Parliamentarians and the Dutch Embassy in Dhaka and suggested contacts for the visit. During the year we regularly took part in calls and joint advocacy actions of the (informal) European network.

#### Communications

Most (semi-)open communications of the platform took place on Facebook. Our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/Netherlands-Myanmar-Solidarity-Platform-100336392408363](https://www.facebook.com/Netherlands-Myanmar-Solidarity-Platform-100336392408363), had approximately 2600 followers and more than 2000 likes, while the Facebook group, [www.facebook.com/groups/nlmmssolidarity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/nlmmssolidarity), had over 250 participants.

In addition, we published a Newsletter in March.

## Support for the Myanmar democracy movement

In order to strengthen our network, the Chair, Frank van der Valk, visited several persons active in the Myanmar Democracy Movement in Thailand in . This included contacts with KNGY and MSDC,

to whom the Foundation has supplied small grants (see below).

This year we were able to support the democracy movement in Myanmar through a number of small grants.

#### 1. KNGY

In the beginning of the year the project under our small grant to the Karenni New Generation Youth (KNGY) was finalized. KNGY reported on their successful Trainings of Trainers on Federalism and Democracy and youth exchange workshop in Kayah State, despite the difficult circumstances.

#### 2. Digital Safety Training & Political Awareness Raising Discussions (Echo Network)

In June, a grant agreement of 2500 euros was signed with Echo Network, a collective of youth activists in Magway division in Myanmar, to facilitate digital safety training and political awareness-raising discussions in rural Magway. This project aims to grant the local community access to their rights and combat injustice that they are facing, while also empowering locals to express their opinions and advocate for change.

By identifying and working together with politically active youth from villages, the project seeks to establish a network of active youths, encouraging them to take action at the local administrative level. The digital safety training workshops aim to create a secure means of communication among the community, with an expectation to safeguard people's privacy, leading to a reduction in arrests and interrogations by the SAC. Moreover, by facilitating political awareness-raising discussions among villages, Echo Network aims to raise awareness among the locals about geopolitics and political developments on the ground, motivating the local community to be more involved in political activism.

#### 3. Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) Awareness and Network Strengthening Project (Mon State Development Centre)

In June, we also signed another grant agreement of 2040 euros with Mon State Development Centre (MSDC), a Mon ethnic resource and education centre providing training and technical support to community leaders, activists, and CBOs/CSOs in Mon and Karen State. With our grant, MSDC will be facilitating a two-day workshop on "Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) Awareness and Civil Resistance", intending to promote collaboration among Mon youth, women and activists for inclusive and effective participation in building a politically sustainable Mon state, where people's democracy and human rights are respected.

#### 4. Emergency humanitarian aid for IDPs in Bago Division, Myanmar

On 10 May 2023, Myanmar military troops raided Nyaung Bin Thar village and nearby villages in Bago Region, Myanmar, violently killing 18 villagers including 5 children, between ages 5-15 years old. More than 300 inhabitants of Nyaung Bin Thar and surrounding villages lost their homes and were forced to flee to the nearby jungle (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-massacres-18-bago-villagers-including-five-children.html> ).

We received an urgent request for assistance for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were in need of basic necessities such as food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. In May, we were able to donate 2000 euros to the IDP via a trusted partner on the ground and again 600 € in August after a dedicated GoFundMe fundraising action. Rice bags, an assortment of medicine, clothing, warm blankets, instant noodle packets, sanitary napkins, toys, nutrition-packed snacks, soap, and salt were purchased and delivered by our partner at a distribution site at Daik Pon district, Kyauk Kyi Township, Bago division located within KNU Brigade (3) territory, Base camp (8). 35 men and 100 women representing a total of 135 family units from Northern and Southern Nyaung Bin Thar villages were present to accept aid at the distribution site. There were also 57 children (gender unspecified) present at the site. The aid received by the family representatives went to 135 family units with a total population of 504 people.

#### 5. Funding English translations for a publication on Karenni Political History (Federal Journal Myanmar)

We were approached by Federal Journal Myanmar, an ethnic minority-led independent media with a vision to support Myanmar's transition to a democratic federal state, with a proposal to fund the English translation of their publication on Karenni Political History. In July, we signed a grant agreement of 2000 euros with our partners at Federal Journal Myanmar. The English translation of "Historical Records of Karenni National Political Affairs" (ကရင်နီအမျိုးသားနိုင်ငံရေးသမိုင်း) by Mi Non Di was finalized early 2024.

#### 6. Funding 5 second-hand laptops (NUG Ministry of Women, Youth & Children Affairs)

Following an urgent request, we donated 1250 euros to the NUG's Ministry of Women, Youth & Children Affairs. The donation was used to purchase 5 second-hand laptops for CDMers (Civile Disobedience Movement) and youth working for the ministry, two of which will be used by a group helping arrested young people inside Myanmar.

### Internal meetings

After the big public event in January, Board and advisers held an internal strategic planning meeting at TNI in February. Later in the year, however, it unfortunately turned out that interest in the platform had diminished to the extent that little of the plans could be executed.

In addition to the Strategic Meeting in February, the Board held three ordinary regular meetings in the course of the year. During the second half of the year, conversations were held with members of the Myanmar diaspora in the Netherlands to increase their involvement in the Foundation (which continued in 2024).

### Finances

This year, part of the funding of the Foundation still came from the € 25,000 grant we received from an institutional donor in 2022. In addition, we received € 1,333 from individual donations. The small grants provided to pro-democracy groups (€ 7,286), € 2,000 for the emergency response, and the costs of the part-time coordinator (€ 4,200) formed the main expenditure of the

Foundation. Our full financial report is included in the Annex.

## Organisation

During 2023, the Board of the NMSP Foundation comprised:

Frank van der Valk, chair,

Swe Swe Aye, secretary, since 1 June,

Ruud Keulen, treasurer,

Thinn Thinn Swe, member, and

Sai Sam Kham, member.

From 1 January through 31 July the platform received strong support by a paid part-time (1 day/week) coordinator, Ms. Phyu Hnin Thwin.