



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 6, 2022

## Myanmar Junta Leader Excluded From ASEAN Summit Again

SINGAPORE — Myanmar's junta leader has been excluded from a regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in November, host Cambodia acknowledged on October 5, in efforts to diplomatically spurn the increasingly isolated military regime.

Although ASEAN has tried to resolve the chaos that has enveloped Myanmar since the military seized power in 2021, paltry advancements have been made on a "five-point consensus" agreed upon with the junta. The five-point plan, agreed to in April 2021, advocates for an instant cessation of violence and promotes dialogue between the military and the anti-coup movement.



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Cambodian Foreign Ministry spokesman Chum Sounry highlighted that the junta was welcome to "nominate a non-political representative for the upcoming ASEAN Summits," namely, the 40th and 41st ASEAN and related summits to be held in Phnom Penh November 10-13.

"The participation of Myanmar in Asean's high-level meetings has been linked to the progress in the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PCs)," Chum said.

What this implies is that junta chief Min Aung Hlaing would be barred from participating in the upcoming summits, just as his top diplomat was excluded from foreign-minister meetings in Phnom Penh in February and August. Since the 2021 coup, General Min and his junta have been excluded from ASEAN-linked gatherings at least four times.

As did Cambodia this year, last year's ASEAN chair Brunei also adhered to the bloc's decision to bar General Min from the summits because of the apparent meager progress and commitment toward solving the unrest in Myanmar triggered by the coup.

Thong Mengdavid, a research fellow at the Mekong Centre for Strategic Studies at the Asian Vision Institute, speculated that, as the chair of ASEAN, Cambodia may not want to seem to back Myanmar's military leaders or ignore the civil-society and opposition movements to the junta. He said that noninterference in Myanmar's political situation is in line with the ASEAN Central Principles of not meddling in member countries' internal affairs.

Meanwhile, frustration within the ASEAN regional bloc — which has been occasionally criticized for being a "toothless talking shop" — is mounting over the Myanmar junta's actions. In July, the junta executed four activists charged with facilitating "terror acts" against the junta during the 2021 coup. There were global protests against the Southeast Asian nation's first executions in decades.

When ASEAN foreign ministers convened in August, they jointly condemned the junta and were "deeply disappointed by the limited progress in and lack of commitment of the Naypyidaw authorities to the



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timely and complete implementation of the five point consensus.”

ASEAN’s own envoy in charge of brokering peace has acknowledged the complexity of the responsibility, admitting that “even Superman cannot solve” the turmoil.

The bloc’s perceived diplomatic snub comes amid U.S. pressure on the junta through the United Nations (UN), following the outcry over an airstrike that killed at least 11 schoolchildren in September 2022. This air strike was reportedly a result of the junta firing on a Myanmar village to target rebels hiding in the area.

During the UN General Assembly earlier this month, U.S. State Department Counselor Derek Chollet met with other governments and with representatives of the self-declared National Unity Government (NUG) — controlled mainly by [deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s party](#).

While Myanmar is preparing for fresh elections in August 2023, Chollet cautioned that there was “no chance” they could be fair.

Recently, a Myanmar military-linked party named a close ally of Gen. Min as its leader, a move largely interpreted to mean that the junta is preparing for elections.

The Union Solidarity and Development Party’s (USDP) executive members elected Khin Yi as the new chairman to replace Than Htay, who resigned due to his health.

Khin Yi, who functioned as the party’s acting chairman, is generally regarded as a close ally of the general. He acted as immigration minister under the present administration until he stepped down in August during a Cabinet reshuffle, sparking talk that he would assume a larger role in the party.

“We will make necessary arrangements to increase the number of party members, supporters, and those will back our party in various ways,” Khin Yi said.

In the 2020 polls, the military-backed party won only 33 seats out of a total of 476 in Parliament. In contrast, Suu Kyi’s party won 396 seats, prompting the USDP to cite election fraud and call for a fresh vote.

The USDP’s calls resulted in the military staging the February 2021 coup that witnessed the arrest of top civilian leaders. While international observers said the elections were free and fair, poll results were rendered null and void.

Since the coup, the junta has been embroiled in conflicts on political and military fronts. Politically, they have had to deal with a nationwide civil disobedience movement. Subsequently, a shadow government was created under the name of the National Unity Government to contest the junta. The NUG constituted the People’s Defense Force (PDF) to resist the junta. The PDF consists mainly of the NLD (National League for Democracy) leadership and their followers.

At first, the NUG faced challenges gaining legitimacy and recognition, but it now enjoys acceptance from different countries and globalist organizations, with the European Union, United States, and ASEAN members highlighting the role of the government in Myanmar’s future.

Militarily, armed ethnic armies and supporters of Suu Kyi continue to undermine the junta’s control in the country. Notably, Myanmar’s ethnic groups are supporting the NUG, with some of these groups even serving as part of it. Also, the Arakan Army was initially on friendly terms with the junta, but recently began to implement its own strategy to boost its control in the Rakhine state. Not surprisingly, the junta began to regard the Arakan Army as a major foe, with both sides fighting in Rakhine in the



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middle of August this year.

Since the coup, junta forces have killed more than 2,300 civilians and detained over 15,700 others, based on reports from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

And adding salt to the wound, Myanmar is burdened with rising inflation and diminishing foreign-currency reserves owing to international sanctions.



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