

Statement of solidarity: Myanmar

We, the undersigned and the organisations we represent, express our grave concern regarding the situation in Myanmar and the persistent abuse of human rights. We are particularly alarmed by the targeting of medical professionals, including those engaging in their human right to protest against the illegal military coup. We stand in solidarity with them and all those who are impacted.

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar Armed Forces, the Tatmadaw, seized control of the government. Many have protested and medical professionals have been at the forefront, setting up their practices in makeshift health centres and clinics instead of government hospitals. The Tatmadaw have responded with appalling brutality including targeting medical professionals and interfering in their activities, which is an abuse of the principle of medical neutrality, enshrined in the First Geneva Convention.

Myanmar security forces have shot at health workers without provocation, arbitrarily arrested many, assaulted some, and forced others to flee their homes. In Yangon alone, at least a hundred medical students have been arrested.

This is a gross violation of the rights of doctors and it is also detrimental to the healthcare of patients, diminishing their right to the highest standard of health which is guaranteed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which was ratified by Myanmar in 2017. Not only is medical care being provided in makeshift health centres with limited resources and facilities, but actions by the Myanmar military, such as cutting off internet access for large sectors of the country, further harm the ability of doctors and nurses to offer the highest level of care.

As doctors, and representatives of medical professional organisations, we are appalled by the treatment of peaceful protestors, especially our colleagues, and the resulting impact on healthcare. Members of our organisations are currently providing support to healthcare professionals in Myanmar and the reports we have received from them and others paint a damning picture of the actions of the Myanmar security forces.


We strongly urge the Tatmadaw to release all those they have arbitrarily arrested, to respect the right to freely protest, and to respect the principle of medical neutrality: allowing medical professionals to provide healthcare unimpeded. We urge telecommunications companies to extend coverage throughout Myanmar (to counteract the steps taken by the Tatmadaw) and the international community to explore coordinated action to oppose the abuse of human rights.

We have included resources at the end of this letter that may be of use to medical professionals looking to support colleagues in Myanmar and may also be of some help to doctors in Myanmar.

Sincerely,



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Council Chair, British Medical Association (BMA)



Dr John Chisholm CBE
Chair, BMA medical ethics committee



Dr Kitty Mohan
Chair, BMA international committee



Dr Adrian James
President, Royal College of Psychiatrists



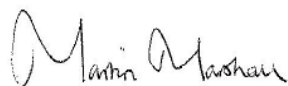
Dr Katherine Henderson
President, Royal College of Emergency Medicine



Mr Edward Morris
President, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)



Miss Ramee Thakar
Senior Vice President for Global Health, RCOG



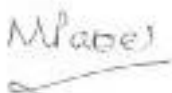
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Dr Helen Crawley
International Medical Director for Membership and Networks, RCGP



Professor Andrew Goddard
President, Royal College of Physicians (RCP)



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Chief Executive, Tropical Health and Education Trust



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Dr Tanya Bleiker
President, British Association of Dermatologists



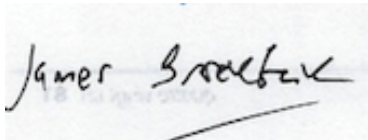
Professor Adrian Gelb
President, World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) and WFSA (UK)



Mr Julian Gore-Booth
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Dr Bethany Moos
Medics 4 Myanmar



Mr Mark Hannaford
Founder & Managing Director, World Extreme Medicine



Ms Evelyn Brealey
Director, Cambridge Global Health Partnerships



Dr Emma Mitchell
Global Health Roots



Dr Nazaneen Nikpour
Global Health Roots

Resources

- Videos on providing first aid care (narrated in Burmese):
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJgobuRNCrM0W1E2T7zSW1KxCefRWJduo>
- Myanmar clinical guidance, including virtual support for Myanmar doctors and nurses:
<https://www.myanmarclinicalguidance.com/>
- Support for Myanmar: <https://www.isupportmyanmar.com/>
- Action Aid, Myanmar: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/myanmar>
- Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), Myanmar:
<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/countries/myanmar>
- UK GP skeleton statement for writing to your MP on the issue (can be adapted by other clinicians also): <https://www.gponline.com/uk-gps-helping-support-doctors-myanmar-following-military-coup/article/1711338>
- Webinar series 'Medics 4 Myanmar' <https://www.facebook.com/ExtremeMedicine>