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Press Release
Japanese Civil Society Organizations Urge Belpearl Japan to Responsibly Exit Pearl Nuclei Trade with Myanmar

Mekong Watch
ayus:Network of Buddhists Volunteers on International Cooperation
Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)
Friends of the Earth Japan
Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
Network Against Japan Arms Trade (NAJAT)

We are civil society organizations that make policy proposals urging Japanese companies to consider the environment, society, and human rights in their overseas business operations.

Since staging a coup on February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military has continued to carry out deliberate killings, arbitrary arrests, torture, and indiscriminate airstrikes including on schools and religious facilities. In addition, due to the ongoing conflict prior to the coup, more than one million Rohingya refugees who fled the violence by the military and other armed groups are living in Bangladesh[*1]. Across the country, more than 3.8 million people have been displaced[*2], and some estimates put the death toll since the coup at 100,000[*3]. Revenue from pearls produced in Myanmar may be used to procure the weapons and jet fuel the Myanmar military needs to commit these war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On June 11, 2026, the Myanmar human rights group, Justice For Myanmar, published a detailed report on the network of Belpearl companies including Belpearl Japan, and Myanma Pearl Enterprise (MPE), which operates under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) and is sanctioned by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Justice For Myanmar's report can be viewed here: "How Belpearl companies in Thailand, Japan and Hong Kong enable the flow of blood pearls to the Myanmar junta": https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/how-belpearl-companies-in-thailand-japan-and-hong-kong-enable-the-flow-of-blood-pearls-to-the-myanmar-junta

Mekong Watch has translated the report into Japanese, which can be accessed here: https://www.mekongwatch.org/resource/news/20260727_01.html

According to the report, Belpearl established Belpearl Myanmar Co. Ltd. in Myanmar. MPE receives 25% of the company's output and sells the pearls at pearl auctions in Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw. Belpearl also established BP Farms (Thailand) Company Limited in neighboring Thailand. The report states that pearl nuclei handled by Belpearl Japan are supplied to Belpearl Myanmar's pearl farms in Myanmar, with BP Farms acting as an intermediary. Pearl nuclei are essential to pearl cultivation. Pearls formed using nuclei supplied by Belpearl Japan may generate, or may have generated, millions of dollars in revenue for MPE.

On August 7, 2026, we sent a letter titled "Please Responsibly End Your Exports of Pearl Nuclei to Myanmar" conveying our concerns to the company and requested a response.

Link to the letter (in Japanese):
https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/rq_belpearl_Letter_20260807.pdf

In April 2021, the United States added MPE to its sanctions list of "Specially Designated Nationals"[*4], and the United Kingdom has also imposed sanctions on MPE and the state-owned timber enterprise[*5]. There is concern that by benefiting MPE, the company's continued business related to Myanmar provides a source of revenue for the junta, and weakens the effectiveness of these sanctions.

For these reasons, we believe that Belpearl Japan's business in Myanmar contravenes the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights[*6]. Under these principles, all companies have a responsibility to respect human rights. We called on the company to responsibly end all transactions that may benefit the junta-controlled MPE, and to fulfill its responsibility to respect human rights.

Belpearl Japan replied by the deadline that it had never had any dealings with sanctioned government entities in Myanmar and that as a matter of strict company policy, it had completely ceased all work connected with Myanmar and that it would have no such transactions in the future.
Link to the email:
https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/A_20260824_BelpearlJapan.pdf

As this response appears to contradict documents obtained by Justice For Myanmar, on September 25 we wrote to the company by email and letter, asking the company to answer the following additional questions:

- Justice For Myanmar published a pearl-nuclei invoice from Belpearl Japan to BP Farms (Thailand) dated 24 October 2025, with goods consigned to Belpearl Myanmar in Yangon and payment to a Minato Bank account held by Belpearl Japan. Do you confirm this transaction took place? If you dispute the document, please say so explicitly.
- On what exact date did Belpearl Japan cease all work related to Myanmar?
- Has Belpearl Japan ceased all supply of goods that it sells, ships, invoices, or receives payment for, where those goods are ultimately destined for, consigned to, or used in Myanmar — including any such dealings between Belpearl Japan and BP Farms (Thailand)?
- Does Belpearl Japan buy, sell, auction, broker, or import pearls or pearl jewelry originating from Myanmar, whether directly or through third countries including Hong Kong?

However, Belpearl Japan did not provide any further response by the September 30 deadline.

We are therefore unable to place confidence in the company's claims. We once again strongly urge Belpearl Japan to responsibly end all transactions that may benefit MPE which is controlled by the Myanmar junta, and to fulfill its responsibility to respect human rights.

*1: Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained.
https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained/
*2: Myanmar UNHCR Displacement Overview (31 Aug 2026).
https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-unhcr-displacement-overview-31-aug-2026
*3: Death toll in Myanmar surpasses 100,000 since 2021 coup.
https://english.dvb.no/death-toll-in-myanmar-surpasses-100000-since-2021-coup/
*4: Treasury Sanctions Key Timber and Pearl Enterprises in Burma.
https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0138
*5: Press release: Foreign Secretary announces further sanctions on companies linked to Myanmar's military regime.
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-announces-further-sanctions-on-companies-linked-to-myanmars-military-regime
*6: United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinesshr_en.pdf

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