

July 1, 2022

H.E. Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of Japan

Statement of Protest and Request Regarding
a Visit to Myanmar by a Cabinet Secretariat Councillor

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

The state-run newspaper of Myanmar, the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, which is now a source of propaganda for the illegitimate junta in Myanmar, reported between May 3 and May 7, 2022 that the Minister for Planning and Finance, the Minister for Commerce, the Minister for Labour and others under the illegitimate junta, met with Mr. Hideo Watanabe, the Chairman of the Japan-Myanmar Association and others.

The *Global New Light of Myanmar* dated May 3 reported that on May 2, Mr. Watanabe discussed “assistance from Japan for Myanmar’s economic development and bilateral cooperation on economic and financial matters” with the Minister for Planning and Finance in Naypyidaw. The paper on May 5 also reported that a delegation led by Mr. Watanabe met with the Minister for Commerce on May 4, and discussed matters of cooperation to enhance trade and investment “between the two countries.” The paper on May 6 reported that the delegation led by Mr. Watanabe met in Naypyidaw with the Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and the Permanent Secretary for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and “cordially discussed matters relating to further promotion of economic and investment cooperation in Myanmar.”

Further, the paper reported on May 7 that the Minister for Labour received Mr. Watanabe and delegates on May 6 and discussed the issue of technical interns. This article also stated that “Head of Indo-Pacific Economic Development Councillor Ando Haruhiko” attended this meeting. We understand that this is Mr. Haruhiko Ando, the Cabinet Secretariat Councillor for Indo-Pacific Economic Development.

That the state-run newspaper described Mr. Watanabe’s group as a “delegation” and reported that a high-ranking Japanese official was also present at some of the meetings with officials of the illegitimate junta in Myanmar gives the impression to the broader international community that the Japanese government recognizes the legitimacy of the Myanmar military’s rule. Moreover, it may well be taken to mean that the current stance of the Japanese government is to promote economic cooperation with Myanmar.

The Japanese government has repeatedly stated that it is urging the Myanmar military that attempted a coup on February 1, 2021 to immediately stop the violence against civilians, release those who are detained including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and swiftly restore a democratic political system, as well as to implement ASEAN’s Five-Point Consensus. However, so far the Myanmar military has failed to comply with any of the three points urged by the Japanese government or with even one of ASEAN’s Five-Point Consensus.

Given this situation, that a high-ranking government official visited Myanmar and met with officials of the illegitimate junta implies that the Japanese government itself does not regard it as problematic that the Myanmar military is not responding to its demands, and contradicts its official position which is critical of the military. Since the attempted coup, as of June 21, 2022, 11,151

civilians have been illegally detained and at least 2,000 civilians have been killed by security forces,* and western nations have imposed sanctions on military-related individuals and corporations. As citizens deeply concerned about human rights abuses by the Myanmar military and calling for the restoration of a democratic system, it is utterly unacceptable that the Japanese government is continuing to treat Myanmar as it did before the attempted coup.

We strongly protest against the decision by the Japanese government to send a Cabinet Secretariat Councillor to Myanmar to meet with high-ranking officials of the illegitimate junta while not publicly disclosing this fact, and demand that the Japanese government take the following actions.

1. Officially announce that the Japan-Myanmar Association is a private organization and that it has no authority over the Japanese government's policy toward Myanmar.
2. Disclose information about Mr. Ando's visit to Myanmar in May reported by the *Global New Light of Myanmar*, including the purpose of the visit, as well as all of the locations visited, meetings held, parties present at the meetings, and the details of the conversations at the meetings.

*See "Daily Briefing in Relation to the Military Coup" by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners: <https://aappb.org/?p=21843>

List of pertinent articles (PDF files saved by Mekong Watch):

"MoPF Union Minister receives Japan-Myanmar Association Chairman" (3 May, 2022)
http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/gnIm_03_05_2022.pdf

"MoC Union Minister receives delegation led by Japan-Myanmar Association Chairman" (5 May, 2022)
http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/gnIm_05_05_2022.pdf

"U Aung Naing Oo, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations receives Mr Watanabe Hideo, Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Association" (6 May, 2022)
http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/gnIm_06_05_2022.pdf

"MoL Union Minister receives Japan-Myanmar Association Chairman" (7 May, 2022)
http://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/gnIm_07_05_2022.pdf

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Endorsed by the following organizations:

Japan (71 organizations):

Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center
Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center
Asian Community Center 21
Asian Health Institute, AHI
Atutu Myanmar
Burmese Relief Center Japan
Chin Youth Organization of Japan (CYO-Japan)
earth tree
FWUBC
Health Assistance and Neighborhood Development Support, Inc.
Human Rights Now

We Support
Yaw Funding Japan
Yokohama Pamphlet Campaign – Myanmar

Added on August 2, 2022
Arrupe Refugee Center

International (40 organizations):

ALTSEAN-Burma (Burma)
Anti Dictatorship in Burma - DC Metropolitan Area (USA)
Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (Myanmar)
Burma Action Ireland (Ireland)
Burma Campaign UK (United Kingdom)
Burmese American Democratic Alliance (USA)
Campaign for a New Myanmar (USA)
Democracy, Peace and Women Organization (Myanmar)
Doh Atu - Ensemble pour le Myanmar (France)
Ecowaste Coaliton of the Philippines (Philippines)
Free Burma Campaign (South Africa)
Future Thanlwin (Myanmar)
Human Rights Foundation of Monland (Myanmar)
International Campaign for the Rohingya (USA)
Justice For Myanmar (Myanmar)
Kachin Women Peace Network (Myanmar)
Karen Human Rights Group (Myanmar)
Karen Peace Support Network (Thailand)
Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (Myanmar)
LA COMMUNAUTE BIRMANE DE FRANCE (France)
Latsinu Women Agency (Myanmar)
Metta Campaign Mandalay (Myanmar)
MNK (Myanmar)
Myanmar Democratic Force in Denmark (Danmark)
Network for Advocacy Action (Myanmar)
Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma) (Thailand)
Progressive Voice (Burma/Myanmar)
Rohingya Action Ireland (Ireland)
Rohingya Refugee Network (UK)
Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas (SCOEWBA) (Myanmar)
SAVE MYANMAR (USA)
Save Myanmar San Francisco (USA)
ShizuYouth for Myanmar (Myanmar)
Support Group for Democracy in Myanmar (The Netherlands)
Ta'ang Women's Organization (Myanmar)
Tamil Nadu Pondy Fisher People Federation (India)
U.S. Campaign for Burma (USA)
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (USA)
Women's League of Burma (Myanmar)
Youth Development Institute (YDI) (Myanmar)