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The hidden crisis: disability rights in post-coup Myanmar

Conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*

Summary

The military coup in Myanmar made living with a disability not just a challenge but, for many, a fight for survival. Important, albeit slow, progress made by the previous civilian government to establish and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities ground to a halt. The junta has attacked, tortured and executed persons with disabilities, imprisoned disability rights advocates, and impeded access to medical supplies and assistive devices. Persons with disabilities have become even more isolated and impoverished.

The greatest disabler of persons with disabilities in Myanmar remains the social, cultural, political and physical barriers that are pervasive throughout the country. Stigma and discrimination have become a source of isolation, dependence and distress. Among the leading drivers of stigma are harmful interpretations of the concept of karma, by which physical or mental impairments are believed to be linked to transgressions committed in a past life. Depression and attempts at suicide are not uncommon among persons with disabilities who internalize these beliefs.

As a distracted world fixes its attention on other crises and conflicts, the situation of persons with disabilities in Myanmar has become a hidden crisis within a forgotten humanitarian catastrophe. Guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar will require a broad, robust and sustained campaign to overturn entrenched stigmas, end discriminatory practices, reform inadequate legal frameworks, and establish the rule of law. Ultimately, ensuring human rights for all in Myanmar, including persons with disabilities, will require bringing the military junta's oppression to an end. It is imperative that the international community mount a stronger, more coordinated and principled campaign to isolate the junta and support the leaders and institutions building the foundation for a democratic and rights-respecting nation.

* Information complementary to that contained in the official report (A/HRC/61/58), submitted to the Human Rights Council pursuant to resolution 58/20.

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I. Introduction

1. The greatest disabler of persons with disabilities in Myanmar is not a physical or mental impairment but the social, cultural, political and physical barriers that are pervasive throughout the country. Millions have been forced into isolation, poverty and despair because of the crushing weight of discrimination and bigotry that are manifested in multiple, debilitating ways. The immense challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Myanmar were made significantly worse by the February 2021 military coup, when even greater hardships and injustices were imposed on persons with disabilities by Myanmar's brutal military junta.

2. As a distracted world fixes its attention on other crises and conflicts, the devastating human rights situation in Myanmar has slipped from the view of the international community. Meanwhile, persons with disabilities have been pushed further into the shadows, becoming even more isolated, impoverished and stigmatized. The situation of persons with disabilities in Myanmar has truly become a hidden crisis within a forgotten humanitarian catastrophe.

3. The good news is that courageous, committed disability rights activists and supporters are working tenaciously to advance the rights, dignity and quality of life of persons with disabilities in Myanmar. The bad news is that they lack the support required to adequately address the enormity of the crisis facing persons with disabilities. The situation is being made exponentially worse by draconian cuts to humanitarian support for those in desperate need.

4. The invisibility of persons with disabilities was reflected in Myanmar's 2024 census, carried out by the junta. Census data indicated that only 2.3 million people aged five or older, or 7.6 percent of the relevant population, had a disability, a massive undercount given all that is known of the prevalence of disabilities globally.[1]

5. Myanmar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the foundational human rights treaty concerning disabilities, in 2011. However, Myanmar's legal framework is still largely out of step with Myanmar's obligations under the treaty. Passed in 2015, the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* represented a step forward, but it does not fully comply with the CRPD.

6. Myanmar's previous civilian government openly engaged advocates to advance the implementation of the law and other reforms to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Under the military junta, however, these efforts came to an abrupt halt as the junta's attacks on civil society and the rule of law undermined the progress made in the prior decade. Many organizations for persons with disabilities have moved their operations underground or have been forced into exile. Disability rights activists lament the collapse of fundamental freedoms, reporting that they no longer have space to demand their rights or advocate for change.

7. Underscoring the immense human rights challenges described in this paper are longstanding religious and cultural beliefs that foment stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities. Many of those interviewed for this paper referenced beliefs about *karma* as a principal cause of discrimination against persons with disabilities. According to popular belief in Myanmar, an individual's impairments are the result of transgressions in a previous life. These beliefs become a source of isolation, dependence and shame and a driver of discrimination and prejudice. Persons with disabilities in Myanmar have sometimes internalized these beliefs, and this has led to attempts at suicide. Tragically, some of these attempts have been successful.

8. Throughout Myanmar, many persons with disabilities face barriers accessing public spaces, buildings and transportation networks. Despite some reforms made under the previous civilian government, most public infrastructure, including that which has been newly constructed or repaired, is inaccessible to persons with disabilities. The scarcity of sign

[1] The global prevalence of disabilities is estimated to be approximately 16 percent. See "Background: Persons with disabilities in Myanmar," below.

language interpreters and the unavailability of materials in Braille, easy-to-read, audio and other formats creates barriers to access to information for persons with disabilities.

9. The February 2021 coup and the oppression by Myanmar's military junta that followed have created even greater hardships and injustices for persons with disabilities. Many have lost their lives or been severely injured in junta airstrikes. Soldiers have killed persons with disabilities unable to flee junta attacks, and there are reports of persons with disabilities being burned alive in their own homes. Persons with disabilities have been displaced and severed from support networks, forced to struggle to survive in hostile, inaccessible environments. Educational and employment opportunities, already limited for persons with disabilities, have become exceedingly scarce.

10. Hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities are internally displaced and must contend with makeshift shelters, unsurfaced pathways and inaccessible toilets and sanitation facilities. There are reports of wheelchairs, prosthetics and other assistive devices being left behind or destroyed in the junta's attacks. Many persons with disabilities experience barriers accessing limited sources of humanitarian aid. Junta-imposed telecommunications blackouts further isolate those with mobility and communication impairments.

11. Since the coup, the state health system in Myanmar has effectively collapsed. The junta responded to a deepening health care crisis by arresting doctors and nurses, bombing hospitals and clinics, and blocking the flow of medicines. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the crisis as rehabilitation services are eliminated and assistive devices become increasingly inaccessible.

12. Historically, demand has far outstripped the supply of assistive technology in Myanmar, requiring many persons with disabilities to go without wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, glasses and other devices. Since the coup, the gap between resources and needs has widened immensely, with landmine contamination and junta attacks on civilians causing injuries that lead to disabilities and junta restrictions on trade and humanitarian aid cutting off the flow of assistive devices and the materials needed to manufacture them.

13. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by Myanmar's post-coup economic collapse. Persons with disabilities were often the first to lose their jobs when employers faced economic headwinds. Many households that include persons with disabilities do not have access to the support necessary to meet their basic needs and resort to negative coping strategies, including drawing down household savings, selling equipment they use for their livelihoods, and forgoing medical treatment. Too often persons with disabilities find themselves exploited and abused amidst these conditions.

14. The earthquake that struck central Myanmar in March 2025 highlighted the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, who faced multiple barriers, including isolation and the lack of human rights protections. The humanitarian response to the earthquake by-and-large ignored the needs and rights of persons with disabilities as they dealt with the severe scarcity of food, shelter, electricity, clean water and sanitation facilities. Their situation has been made even worse by the junta's systematic blocking the flow of food, medicine and supplies to opposition-controlled areas.

15. A remarkable network of Myanmar civil society organizations, many led and staffed by persons with disabilities, are working against all odds to promote and defend the rights of persons with disabilities. Many distribute food, medicine and cash assistance to persons with disabilities, facilitate access to assistive devices, run awareness-raising campaigns, and provide vocational training and other education programs. Others work to empower persons with disabilities with information and advocacy. As they do so, they must navigate the innumerable barriers erected by the junta and face the very real risk of harassment, arrest and violence.

16. Advocates for persons with disabilities have described a "grim" funding climate since the coup, as donors have reduced their budgets and shifted focus to other priorities. While some UN agencies, humanitarian organizations and donor governments have made commendable efforts to prioritize support for and inclusion of persons with disabilities in

Myanmar, far more must be done. According to the UN, "inclusion of persons with disabilities is not currently a major priority for humanitarian actors in Myanmar."

17. Guaranteeing the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar will require a significant, multifaceted effort to overturn entrenched stigmas, end discriminatory practices, reform inadequate legal frameworks, and establish the rule of law. Emerging governance institutions are developing plans for a future, democratic Myanmar that includes protecting the rights of all, including persons with disabilities. But much more must be done to lay the foundation necessary to make this vision a reality.

18. The success of this endeavor will require the strong support of those inside and outside Myanmar. Religious and community leaders as well as public figures must be willing to participate in a highly visible and coordinated effort to combat prejudicial attitudes and beliefs. Social media influencers and popular platforms must be engaged and encouraged to focus attention on the importance of lifting these powerful barriers. Political leaders must proactively engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in nation-building and reform initiatives and prioritize efforts to bring Myanmar's legal framework into compliance with international standards. They must engage persons with disabilities to identify and lift barriers, large and small, including powerful stigmas at all levels of society. Humanitarian organizations must increase their commitment to accessibility and the inclusivity of their programs. Donors must step up to underwrite these commitments.

19. You cannot solve a problem that you do not recognize. Making this hidden crisis visible and reversing the social, cultural, political and economic barriers that are imprisoning persons with disabilities in Myanmar, and in refugee communities outside of Myanmar, will require a robust multifaceted campaign and the resources to sustain it. This will require what is currently missing – political will.

20. Finally, it will be impossible to realize the vision of a Myanmar that respects and protects the human rights of all persons without an end to the military junta's oppression. It is imperative that the international community mount a stronger, more coordinated and principled campaign to isolate the junta and support the leaders and institutions building the foundation for a democratic and rights-respecting nation.

II. Methodology

21. This paper draws from desk research, private submissions to the Special Rapporteur, interviews with persons with disabilities, and meetings with organizations for persons with disabilities, humanitarian agencies and international non-governmental organizations. Eleven submissions were received from governments, humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations and a network of organizations for persons with disabilities in response to his call for inputs on the rights of persons with disabilities.[2]

22. The Special Rapporteur extends his heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to this paper. In particular, he appreciates the efforts made by disability rights advocates and persons with disabilities to share their painful experiences from the years following the military coup. He is inspired by their courage, which gives him hope for Myanmar's future.

III. Background: Persons with disabilities in Myanmar

23. Persons with disabilities have long lived in the shadows in Myanmar. They have been pushed out of public spaces, excluded from political discourse, and discriminated against in all aspects of their lives.

[2] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, "Call for inputs: Status of the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar," https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-status-rights-persons-disabilities-myanmar.

24. The paucity of public data concerning persons with disabilities in Myanmar underscores their invisibility in the public sphere. Prior to Myanmar's decade of quasi-democratic governance beginning in 2011, military regimes made few efforts to identify or address the rights and requirements of persons with disabilities.[3]

25. In 2014, a nominally civilian—but military-backed—government conducted a census that provided the most comprehensive nationwide data concerning persons with disabilities in Myanmar to date. The census found that there were 2.3 million people who experienced some amount of difficulty in four functional domains: seeing, hearing, walking or remembering/concentrating.[4] This figure constituted 4.6 percent of the total population, far short of the estimated 16 percent global prevalence of disabilities. Nevertheless, data from the 2014 census reflected many of the historical challenges facing persons with disabilities in Myanmar, which are discussed at length in this paper.

26. In 2019, the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy conducted an Inter-Censal Survey that provided fresh data concerning persons with disabilities in Myanmar. Using The Washington Group's Short Set of Questions, an authoritative methodology for assessing disability, the Inter-Censal Survey found that approximately 6 million people, or 12.8 percent of the population, reported at least one impairment.[5] Consistent with global data, the prevalence of impairments rose sharply with age.

27. On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military launched a coup, deposing the democratically elected government. Coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing quickly set up the State Administration Council to take control of government institutions. In the weeks and months that followed, the junta brutally cracked down on a non-violent pro-democracy campaign, opening fire on unarmed protesters at massive demonstrations and locking up thousands of those who dared to peacefully resist the military takeover. After the military crushed the peaceful protest movement, thousands of people took up arms against the junta, forming People's Defense Forces to fight against the military or joining existing opposition groups. Ethnic resistance organizations escalated their military operations while providing support and training to civilians to fight in the campaign to establish federal democratic rule in Myanmar.

28. The military junta has subsequently used unrestrained violence and repression to undermine the democratic aspirations of the people of Myanmar. It has arrested nearly 30,000 people on political grounds, of whom as many as 22,000 remain behind bars. As its control of territory and population centers weakened, the military resorted to attacking civilians in areas controlled by opposition forces. Military fighter jets routinely bomb towns, villages, marketplaces, hospitals, schools, displacement camps and other civilian locations. The junta systematically restricts the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in opposition-controlled areas.

29. Junta soldiers are responsible for massacres, torture, widespread sexual violence and the use of human shields, among other human rights violations, many of which likely

[3] Shortly after adoption in 2008 of a new constitution that would lead to elections and the installation of a quasi-democratic government, the previous military government conducted the First Myanmar National Disability Survey, finding that there were 1.3 million persons with disabilities, or 2.3 percent of Myanmar's population of 58 million. Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and The Leprosy Mission International (Myanmar), *First Myanmar National Disability Survey 2010*, https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Report_First_Myanmar_National_Disability_Survey_GovtofMyanmar_2010.pdf.

[4] Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, *2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Disability*, Census Report Volume 4-K, August 2017, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/thematic-report-disability.

[5] Department of Population, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, *The 2019 Inter-censal Survey, The Union Report,* December 2020, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/inter-censal_survey_union_report_english.pdf.

constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. As described in this paper, persons with disabilities have often been the victims of these crimes.

30. The coup upended progress being made under the civilian government towards upholding the rights of persons with disabilities. Reform processes that were underway were abandoned and programs to support persons with disabilities halted. In late 2024, the junta carried out a farcical "census" operation, despite its inability to access large swathes of the country. The exercise, which the junta said would facilitate the development of voter lists, appeared to be largely a charade to justify its false claims of widespread voter fraud in the 2020 elections and provide a veneer of legitimacy to elections that it is planning to initiate in late 2025.

31. The methodological shortcomings, limited available data, and dubious findings of the junta's 2024 census undermine its usefulness and underscore the marginalization and invisibility of persons with disabilities in Myanmar. According to the report, approximately 2.3 million people, or 7.6 percent of those over five years of age, have some form of disability. The report does not provide an explanation for the wide discrepancy between this figure and the estimated 16 percent global prevalence of disability nor the sharp drop from the nearly 13 percent prevalence reported in the 2019 Inter-Censal Survey. It is unclear whether the Ministry of Population intends to publish further information collected during the census.[6] Available reports from the 2024 census provide much less detail concerning persons with disabilities than either the 2014 census or the 2019 Inter-Censal Survey.

IV. International legal framework

A. International human rights law

32. Myanmar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011.[7] Under the CRPD, States Parties must ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities. The CRPD requires States Parties to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and advance their equal participation in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Under the CRPD, States Parties recognize disability as resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and equal participation in society. As such, the CRPD clarifies that persons with disabilities are those who have "long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

33. The CRPD commits States Parties to upholding core human rights principles, including equality and non-discrimination. The CRPD obligates States Parties to take measures to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities in matters related to the home, the family, education, health, work and employment, an adequate standard of living and social protection. States Parties must further facilitate inclusive education at all levels and promote employment and career advancement opportunities for persons with disabilities and inclusive work environments. States Parties must ensure individuals with disabilities enjoy liberty of movement, the right to a nationality, freedom of expression and opinion, access to information and the right to privacy on an equal basis with others. The CRPD reaffirms the inherent right to life of every human and underscores that persons with disabilities must enjoy this right on an equal basis with others.

34. The CRPD requires States Parties to facilitate the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life.

[6] The Department of Population published a 190 page "thematic report" on disability based on the 2014 census. To date, no such document has been published using data from the 2024 census.

[7] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 3 May 2008, https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf.

To this end, States Parties must adopt appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy their rights in practice. The CRPD commits States Parties to adopt awareness-raising measures to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices, to promote respect for the rights of persons with disabilities, and to advance awareness of their capabilities and contributions to society.

35. States Parties must ensure the accessibility of physical environments, transportation, information, communication technologies, services and facilities and protect persons with disabilities from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including gender-based violence. The CRPD highlights the rights of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in their communities. In situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, States Parties must take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities.

36. States Parties must consult and involve persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in the implementation of the CRPD and other decision-making processes relating to persons with disabilities. The CRPD emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to support implementation of the Convention.

37. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has adopted eight general comments clarifying States' obligations under the CRPD.[8] These relate to equal recognition before the law, accessibility, the rights of women and girls with disabilities, the right to inclusive education, the right to independent living, equality and non-discrimination, the participation of persons with disabilities in the implementation and monitoring of the CPRD, and work and employment.

38. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has highlighted the responsibility of States Parties to address the increased risk of discrimination against persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters and to ensure the principle of non-discrimination in all programs and actions taken as part of emergency responses.[9] Humanitarian aid delivery must consider the requirements of persons with disabilities and ensure their equal access to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. States Parties must also engage with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design and implementation of policies to address all stages of emergencies.

39. Myanmar has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD, which establishes a complaints mechanism for those impacted by violations of the Convention. As such, individuals or groups in Myanmar cannot lodge complaints with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for inquiry and resolution.

40. Under the CRPD, States Parties must regularly report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the measures they have taken to implement the rights of persons with disabilities and on the progress made in fulfilling their treaty obligations. Myanmar submitted its initial state party's report in 2015 and its reply to the list of issues in 2019.[10] In its 2019 concluding observations, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requested Myanmar to submit its combined second, third and fourth reports by 7

[8] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comments, https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd/general-comments.

[9] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment 6, UN Doc. CRPD/C/GC/6*,26 April 2018.

[10] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Initial report submitted by Myanmar under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2014, UN Doc. CRPD/C/MMR/1, 6 October 2017, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FMMR%2F1&Lang=en; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Replies of Myanmar to the list of issues, UN Doc. CRPD/C/MMR/Q/1/Add.1, 28 August 2019, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FMMR%2FQ%2F1%2FAdd.1&Lang=en.

January 2025.[11] The junta has not submitted a report to the Committee. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with other treaty bodies, continues to be unable to initiate a review on Myanmar's compliance with the CRPD because the General Assembly's Credential Committee has not formally recognized a government to represent Myanmar.

41. Other human rights instruments obligate Myanmar to ensure non-discrimination on the basis of disability. Myanmar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991.[12] The Convention obligates States Parties to respect and ensure the rights of children without discrimination of any kind, including based on the child's disability or the disability of the child's parent or legal guardian. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasized that States Parties must explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in constitutional provisions and laws, provide effective remedies when rights violations occur, and conduct awareness-raising and educational campaigns, among other measures to protect and promote the rights of children with disabilities.[13] In the context of armed conflicts, the Committee has affirmed that States Parties have an obligation to take all necessary measures to protect children from the adverse consequences of war and armed conflict, including injury by landmines and unexploded ordnance, as well as to ensure that children impacted by armed conflict have access to adequate health and social services.

42. Myanmar is also a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[14] Both treaties guarantee the right of all individuals to have equal access to education, employment, health services and social security, as well as obligate States Parties to ensure that people can participate in social and cultural life without discrimination regardless of status, including disability. Myanmar is not a party to several foundational human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. However, many of the rights enshrined in these treaties, including the right to non-discrimination, are also protected by customary international law and thus are binding upon Myanmar.

B. International humanitarian law and international criminal law

43. Conflict between the Myanmar military and resistance groups in many parts of the country constitutes non-international armed conflict and is therefore subject to customary international humanitarian law and Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.[15] Customary international humanitarian law and Common Article 3 require special respect and protection for persons with disabilities, including the adoption of "protective measures for

[11] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the initial report of Myanmar, UN Doc. CRPD/C/MMR/CO/1, 22 October 2019, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FMMR%2FCO%2F1&Lang=en.

[12] Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2 September 1990, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf.

[13] Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 9: The Rights of Children with Disabilities, UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/9, 27 February 2007, https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/crc/2007/en/48507.

[14] International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cescr.pdf; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 18 December 1979, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf.

[15] Myanmar ratified the four Geneva Conventions in 1992.

groups with special vulnerabilities such as persons with disabilities."[16] The specific requirements of persons with disabilities must be taken into account when providing assistance and protection to populations displaced by armed conflict.[17] Those taking no part in hostilities must be treated humanely without adverse distinction, including on the basis of disability.[18] International humanitarian law also requires that parties to armed conflict not impede the passage of humanitarian aid, including medical supplies.[19]

44. A key tenet of international humanitarian law is the principle of distinction, which requires parties to armed conflict to distinguish between civilian and military targets. This principle applies equally to persons with disabilities, who, as described in this paper, have often been the targets of attacks by the junta. Grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other serious violations of international humanitarian law may constitute war crimes.[20] Similarly, killings, torture, rape, sexual violence, forcible transfer, arbitrary detention and other human rights violations experienced by persons with disabilities in Myanmar may constitute crimes against humanity when committed in the context of a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population.[21]

45. While Myanmar has not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the National Unity Government lodged a declaration with the Court in 2021 under Article 12(3) of the Rome Statute accepting its jurisdiction over crimes committed in Myanmar since July 2002. The Prosecutor has confirmed receipt of the declaration but has neither commented on its validity nor opened an investigation into alleged crimes committed entirely within Myanmar.

46. Under Article 14, ICC Member States may request that the Prosecutor initiate an investigation of crimes committed in Myanmar during this period.[22] The Prosecutor must issue a decision on the request. If the request is denied, Member States may appeal to the Court.

C. UN Security Council Resolution 2475

47. In 2019, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2475 on persons with disabilities in armed conflict.[23] The resolution highlights the disproportionate impact of

[16] International Committee of the Red Cross, Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rules, Rule 138. The Elderly, Disabled and Infirm, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule138; International Committee of the Red Cross, Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Art. 3 (Aug. 12, 1949). https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciii-1949?activeTab=. Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions (Common Article 3) prohibits the inhumane treatment of wounded and sick persons without any adverse distinction founded on race, color, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. It requires the wounded and sick to be collected and cared for.

[17] Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 131.

[18] Common Article 3; Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 87.

[19] Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rule 55.

[20] William I. Pons, Janet E. Lord and Michael Ashley Stein, "Addressing the accountability void: War crimes against persons with disabilities," International Review of the Red Cross, vol. 922, November 2022, https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/addressing-the-accountability-void-war-crimes-against-persons-with-disabilities-922.

[21] See, William I. Pons, Janet E. Lord and Michael Ashley Stein, "Disability, Human Rights Violations, and Crimes Against Humanity," 18 August 2021, vol. 116, no. 1, January 2022, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-journal-of-international-law/article/abs/disability-human-rights-violations-and-crimes-against-humanity/5C47D5C49E84873D74C05F1AF8B9826A.

[22] In his recent report to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur urged States parties to the International Criminal Court to refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC Prosecutor under Article 14 Rome Statute, an action that would compel the Prosecutor to make a decision on the validity of the National Unity Government's Article 12(3) declaration. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, "Situation of human rights in Myanmar," UN Doc. A/HRC/55/65, 14 March 2024, paras. 112 and 122(a).

[23] UN Security Council, Resolution 2475, UN Doc. S/RES/2475, 20 June 2019, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/186/60/pdf/n1918660.pdf.

armed conflict on persons with disabilities and the obligations of Member States, parties to conflict and the United Nations with respect to persons with disabilities in this context. In the resolution, the Security Council urged Member States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate the discrimination and marginalization of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict, particularly those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The resolution also called upon Member States and parties to conflict to prevent violence against civilians; facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to all persons requiring assistance; ensure that persons with disabilities receive equal access to basic services including education, healthcare, transportation and information and communication systems; build capacity and knowledge on the needs and rights of persons with disabilities among peacekeepers; and encourage further reporting on the impacts of conflict on persons with disabilities. The resolution also called for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes related to "humanitarian action, conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction, and peacebuilding."

48. The resolution is binding on all UN Member States, including Myanmar.

D. Regional instruments

49. The ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, the foundational human rights document of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations adopted in 2012, explicitly extends rights protections to persons with disabilities, stating, "[e]very person is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth [within the Declaration], without distinction of any kind such as … disability."[24] The Declaration further declares that the rights of persons with disabilities are "an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

50. In the years since the adoption of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, ASEAN has advanced various initiatives to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the region. ASEAN declared 2011-2020 the "ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities."[25] At the 2018 ASEAN Summit, ASEAN adopted the "ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," which outlined actions ASEAN Member States should take to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life.[26] In 2023, ASEAN adopted the "ASEAN Declaration on Disability-Inclusive Development and Partnership for a Resilient ASEAN Community" to advance the implementation of the CRPD, which has been ratified by all ASEAN members, and the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan.[27]

V. Myanmar law and policy

A. Myanmar legal framework

51. Myanmar's 2008 Constitution, drafted by a previous military regime, reflects a paternalist view of persons with disabilities. Missing is any reference to the basic rights of persons with disabilities. Instead, it notes that the government should "care for mothers and children, orphans, fallen Defence Services personnel's children, the aged and the disabled."[28]

[24] ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, 19 November 2012, https://asean.org/asean-human-rights-declaration/.

[25] Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of the Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community, 17 November 2011, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Bali_Declaration_on_Disabled_Person.pdf.

[26] Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 15 November 2018, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ASEAN-Enabling-Masterplan-2025-Mainstreaming-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities.pdf.

[27] ASEAN Declaration on Disability-Inclusive Development and Partnership for a Resilient ASEAN Community, 5 September 2023, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ASEAN-Declaration-on-Disability-Inclusive-Development-and-Partnership-for-a-Resilient-ASEAN-Community.pdf.

[28] Myanmar Constitution, 2008, article 32.

The Constitution has a non-discrimination clause, but disability is not included as a protected category.[29]

52. In 2015, Myanmar's Parliament passed the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which repealed the 1958 *Myanmar Disability Employment Act.*[30] The adoption of the law reflected, in part, an effort to implement various aspects of the CRPD and represented a significant step forward in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar. Critically, the law entrenched the right to non-discrimination on the basis of disability in Myanmar's domestic legal framework and affirmed that persons with disabilities enjoy rights under Myanmar law on an equal basis with others. The law defines a person with a disability as one who "suffers long-term physical, vision, speaking, hearing, intellectual or sensory impairments from birth or not."[31] In its 2019 concluding observations on Myanmar, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities criticized this definition as not in line with the human rights model of disability described in the CRPD.[32]

53. The 2015 law imposes affirmative duties on the government to support persons with disabilities. These include providing for the basic needs of persons with disabilities who cannot work, developing an inclusive education system, ensuring free or affordable health care for persons with disabilities, supporting and delivering rehabilitation and vocational training programs, and promoting the accessibility of public spaces. The law sets criminal penalties for employers and others who discriminate against, abuse or exploit persons with disabilities and provides specific protections for women and children with disabilities.

54. The *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* establishes a National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to monitor implementation of the law and coordinate policies concerning persons with disabilities among government bodies. The National Committee was formed in 2017 after the adoption of regulations to implement the law.

55. In the decade prior to the military coup, provisions relating to persons with disabilities were also incorporated into other legislation and policy initiatives, including the 2012 *Social Security Law*,[33] 2012 *Natural Disaster Management Law*,[34] 2020 *Myanmar National Building Code*,[35] *Myanmar Policy for Early Childhood Care and Development*,[36] and *Universal Service Strategy for Myanmar* (2018-2022).[37] A 2014 National Social Protection Plan provided for cash allowances for persons with disabilities.[38] Myanmar's *National Strategy for the Development of Persons with Disabilities (2016-2025)* sought to coordinate government policies to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

56. It is one thing to pass a law, it is quite another to implement it. In the years after the passage of the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the protections and rights enshrined in that and other laws were undermined by poor enforcement. In many cases, law enforcement officials appeared to lack awareness of legal protections for persons with

[29] *Id.*, article 348.

[30] Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2015, https://www.dsw.gov.mm/sites/default/files/ebooks-download/The%20Right%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20Law.pdf

[31] *Id*. article 2.

[32] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 6.

[33] The Social Security Law, 2012, https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Myanmar_socsec.pdf.

[34] National Disaster Management Law, 2013, https://www.myanmar-law-library.org/IMG/pdf/2013-07-31-natural_disaster_management_law-en.pdf.

[35] Myanmar National Building Code, 2020, https://www.myanmar-law-library.org/topics/myanmar-construction-law/myanmar-national-building-code-2020/.

[36] Myanmar Policy for Early Childhood Care and Development, 2014, https://www.dsw.gov.mm/sites/default/files/ebooks-download/ECCD%20Policy-%20English%20Version_Final%20Layout.pdf.

[37] Universal Service Strategy for Myanmar (2018 to 2022), January 2018, https://www.motc.gov.mm/sites/default/files/Universal%20Service%20Strategy%20%28Draft%29_0.pdf.

[38] Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan, December 2014, https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mya161215.pdf.

disabilities. In its concluding observations in 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern that the National Committee lacked the human, technical and financial resources necessary to fulfill its mandate.

B. Post-coup collapse of the rights and political participation of persons with disabilities

57. After the 2021 military coup, progress on reforming the legal and policy framework concerning persons with disabilities came to a halt. In fact, protections for the human rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar all but collapsed.

58. Current living conditions for the Rohingya in northern Rakhine are largely unreported due The junta has occasionally made symbolic gestures towards the rights of persons with disabilities, but these measures have been devoid of substance and have had no positive impact. For example, in 2022, the junta produced a *Five Year Strategic Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The strategic plan highlights six areas of focus—health, education, work and employment, social protection, disasters and accessibility—but contains little more than vaguely worded aspirations and references to existing legislation. There is no evidence of any positive actions taken to implement the plan.

59. According to state media, the junta has continued some efforts to register persons with disabilities under the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. While the junta claims to have made cash disbursements to persons with disabilities, some report no longer receiving cash payments under the government's social security program after the coup. The junta has provided no further information about any significant actions to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Little is known about the current status or activities of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is now chaired by the junta's Vice Chairman, Vice Senior General Soe Win.

60. Human rights defenders and humanitarian actors report that laws intended to protect persons with disabilities, including criminal law provisions, have not been enforced since the coup. Access to justice for persons with disabilities has thus declined precipitously. This is particularly true when soldiers or members of other armed groups violate the rights of persons with disabilities. Junta soldiers and officials have reportedly threatened persons with disabilities who report human rights violations as well as their families.

61. Following the coup, space for civic engagement and advocacy concerning the rights of persons with disabilities completely collapsed. Many disability rights advocates were forced to flee Myanmar. Those who remained were largely unable or unwilling to engage the junta. A woman with a physical disability from Shan State told the Special Rapporteur that she was actively engaged in advocacy concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in the years leading up to the coup. During that time, she served on a committee that engaged with the regional and national government. After the coup, she resigned from the committee and was forced into hiding.

62. Youth with disabilities report that advocacy toward companies concerning their employment practices is no longer possible in the post-coup environment. A man with a disability from Mandalay Region summed up the situation since the coup: "From 2015 to 2020, we can demand rights for ourselves, but now we don't know where we can demand our rights."

C. Policies of emerging governance institutions

63. The National Unity Government, National Unity Consultative Council, ethnic resistance organizations and other emerging governance institutions have been working to build the foundation for a democratic and rights-respecting Myanmar. These efforts have included steps to build a policy framework that could protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

64. The Federal Democracy Charter, a framework agreement for a future federal, democratic Myanmar, explicitly guarantees persons with disabilities the full enjoyment of their rights and includes a non-discrimination clause that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.[39] The Charter also provides that a future federal government will have an independent commission on the rights of persons with disabilities.[40]

65. In 2022, the National Unity Government's Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management published its "Commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities" after consultations with the Myanmar Coordination Committee for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities.[41] The commitments include ensuring the equal participation of persons with disabilities in the formation of governance bodies, addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in humanitarian and disaster relief programs, and collecting data concerning persons with disabilities. Policy documents developed by the National Unity Government's Ministry of Health and Education seek to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Telehealth programs, online education courses and awareness-raising materials developed by the National Unity Government aim to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

66. While these steps are important, more must be done. At present, the National Unity Government clearly lacks the capacity to administer robust programs to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. Disability rights do not appear to be an area of focus for the National Unity Government and other emerging governance structures. Persons with disabilities are underrepresented in the leadership of the National Unity Government and other resistance institutions.

VI. Stigma and discrimination

67. Social stigma is the single greatest disabler of persons with disabilities in Myanmar. Bigotry and discrimination against persons with disabilities is often driven by longstanding religious and cultural beliefs and practices that link impairments with moral failings in a past life. Persons with disabilities also attribute the discrimination and exclusion from civic life they face to societal ignorance and a lack of awareness of the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities. As a result, many persons with disabilities experience profound isolation and heavy dependence on family members and others.

A. Religious and cultural beliefs and practices

68. Myanmar is a diverse multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Religious and cultural practices vary widely among different populations but often incorporate teachings and beliefs that foster bias and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

69. Among Myanmar's majority Buddhist population, the concept of *karma* plays a prominent role in shaping attitudes toward persons with disabilities. According to a popular interpretation of this concept, a physical or mental impairment is the consequence of a karmic debt related to misdeeds in a previous life. A man with a physical disability said, "Since I was young until now, the peoples' perception towards persons with disabilities is very conservative and traditional. Their view is that we are unlucky people and we have to pay for our past lives, as if we did bad things in our past lives."

[39] Federal Democracy Charter, ratified by People's Assembly 27-29 January 2022, articles 27 and 47, https://mofua.nugmyanmar.org/uploads/publications/WmSsxrT486Vd6jGq2o6CJ7XzUL7mAXp32rGrAGoq.pdf.

[40] Federal Democracy Charter, Part II, section 33, https://crphmyanmar.org/legislation/federal-democracy-charter/fdc-part-2/.

[41] National Unity Government, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, "Commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities," 16 February 2022, https://assets-mohadm.nugmyanmar.org/images/2022/02/220206-MoHADM-Commitment-for-GDS-.pdf.

70. A woman with a physical disability told the Special Rapporteur how her family sometimes attributed her impairment to karma. “You must have broken someone’s leg in a past life,” she recalled them saying.

71. These beliefs are reinforced by the teachings of religious leaders and religious parables that feature characters who experience hardships—including impairments—because of evil actions in a past life. A woman with a disability from Rakhine State told the Special Rapporteur about sitting in the audience as monks delivered the message that her disability was her own fault:

> In Buddhist religious ceremonies, monks publicly preach that our impairments are due to our actions in past lives. We committed bad deeds and are now repaying our sins. … How timid we are as [we sit in] the audience!

72. An emphasis on the perfection of bodies and minds by some religious authorities have contributed to a belief that persons with disabilities are spiritually inferior and unfit for religious practice.[42] Buddhist religious authorities often prevent persons with disabilities from becoming monks or joining in religious ceremonies because of their impairments. A person with a disability explained to the Special Rapporteur:

> We are not allowed to be monks. We can only be novices. Because of our disability, when I was wearing a robe [as a novice], I faced discrimination. Due to my disability, I couldn't ask alms. Some monks say that you should just eat from the alms that we collect from every household. … If we have to go to a religious ceremony, we can't go together with the other monks.

73. Discriminatory beliefs also derive from other religious teachings and belief systems. Animists sometimes interpret one’s impairment as a punishment or curse by an offended spirit. Astrological practices and superstitions have also amplified fear and stigma of persons with disabilities. But these destructive views are not confined to religious or folk beliefs. Some hold the belief that impairments are inherited and therefore persons with disabilities should not have children.

74. Religious teachings and practices can also help to advance the rights and quality of life of persons with disabilities. A Buddhist monk emphasized to the Special Rapporteur that compassion and loving-kindness are important components of Buddhist teaching that can help counter negative attitudes and behaviors toward persons with disabilities. Respecting persons with disabilities and treating them with respect and fairness can be a source of good karma, he explained, helping one to accumulate merit. Christian missionaries have played important roles in establishing services for persons with disabilities in Myanmar, including in schools and care centers.

75. Many persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur that they are perceived only as objects of pity. A woman with a physical disability from Shan State said:

> They regard us just as poor people. I’ve heard from the generation before that people with disabilities are poor people, so [others] must support them because they cannot take care of themselves. In my experience, they come and donate gifts and other donations to help us.

76. The founder of an organization for persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur:

> If you become [disabled], they say this is a punishment from God because you were not good enough in the past life. You are less than other people. You are not the equal of other people. That is the traditional way of thinking. We are not treated equally in society. We are not invited to events or to participate in community meetings. [They think,] ‘if we give them a small [bit of] charity, that is enough.’

[42] See, Hannah Ware and Matthew Schuelka, “Constructing ‘disability’ in Myanmar: teachers, community stakeholders, and the complexity of disability models,” *Disability & Society*, vol. 34, no. 6, p. 863-884.

77. These perceptions contribute to feelings of shame and the isolation of persons with disabilities. A man with a physical disability from Ayeyarwady Region said:

> People should change their stereotypes or traditional beliefs towards persons with disabilities. Especially, please, don't treat persons with disabilities as pitiful creatures. We would like to enjoy equal opportunities and equal rights in every sector of our country.

78. Discrimination, stigma and stereotypes often undermine the agency and independence of persons with disabilities. Many told the Special Rapporteur that others view them as helpless and underestimate their abilities, when in fact they are highly capable when given opportunities. A woman with a physical disability from Shan State said:

> I faced a lot of discrimination in my life, [including from] from my relatives. When I started studying in school, all my relatives discriminated against me. My relatives and teachers didn't want to accept me going to the school. They said that I wouldn't find a proper job, even if I was educated. People believe we [people with disabilities] cannot do [anything] or learn like other people.

79. A woman with a disability who leads an organization supporting persons with disabilities said:

> The community doesn't accept our disability. I myself am a person with a disability and a woman as well. So, when I established an organization for persons with disabilities, people started criticizing me: 'What can you achieve? What can this organization achieve led by a disabled woman?'

80. A man with a hearing impairment described the skepticism he faced in his community:

> [They asked,] 'Did you graduate? Can you read? Do you have any job?' And when I said I graduated from the university, they said, 'What are you doing now that you have graduated from university? You don't need to graduate from university…' They were confused that I went to university. To them, persons with disabilities just sleep and eat and that is all.

81. A man with a physical disability living in Yangon described his community's and family's lack of belief in his abilities:

> Most of the people in our community don't think we can do anything. … They believe that we are useless. Even in my family, I face discrimination. They use words like, 'You cannot do,' 'You cannot go,' words like that. They never empower our capacity.

82. Discriminatory attitudes toward persons with disabilities appear to be heightened in rural areas and small towns, when compared to Yangon and other urban centers. But serious challenges remain for persons with disabilities in cities.

83. A woman with a physical disability described her difficulty finding housing in Yangon after fleeing conflict in northern Shan State:

> We tried to rent a house in Yangon for [several] persons with disabilities to live. Everything was finalized; we just needed to sign the contract for the rent. The owners asked if we had a guardian for the group. We told them that even though we are disabled, we can take care of ourselves. The owners refused to rent the house [even though] we are over 18 and have our own business, so we can afford the rent. They said that they don't want to rent to disabled people. The owners refused to sign the contract. We found another house and similarly they refused to rent to us. It is based on the culture, because people are superstitious and think we committed a sin in our past life, so they believe that if they let us in their house, they will lose money because of us.

B. Awareness

84. Stigma, stereotypes and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Myanmar are often driven by a lack of awareness among the general public. Many persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur that people in their community do not understand the barriers faced by persons with disabilities and are not aware of their rights and capabilities.

85. A man with a physical disability living in Yangon described how people are afraid to greet him when he goes out on the street. Others described the negative attention they receive when in public. A woman who lost a hand in an accident as a child spoke about her experience:

> The people in my community view my disability as a strange one. They concentrate on my disability. It makes me uncomfortable in my community. … I have no hand. It is very obvious. When I go to the public area, everyone concentrates on me. When I go to a wedding, everyone's eyes are on me rather than the bride or groom.

86. The lack of awareness concerning persons with disabilities extends to persons with disabilities themselves. The Special Rapporteur was told that persons with disabilities sometimes do not understand the needs of people with different types of impairments than their own. Some told the Special Rapporteur that, prior to engaging with the disability rights community, they did not have an awareness of their own rights or knowledge that other people were facing similar challenges.

87. Many persons with disabilities affirmed the important role that awareness-raising activities have played in their own lives, either by informing the community around them or by increasing their awareness of their own rights.

88. A woman with a physical disability explained:

> I had to learn about disability inclusion. [An organization for persons with disabilities] invited persons with disabilities in our area to a training on disability awareness. At first, I felt that I am the only disabled person. … I only stayed in my house. After the training, I understood that we don't need to discriminate against persons with disabilities, who are also human beings. This kind of [training] motivates me and helps me for my future.

89. She went on to explain how she was able to demand accommodations when she sat for an important exam because she and her parents understood her rights as a person with a disability:

> The problem is that, as persons with disabilities, we have a right for an extra hour [on the exam]. But we have to inquire and apply. It should be our right automatically. We shouldn't have to apply. We have these rights, but they don't come automatically. We have to apply and request from the authorities. I received that right because of my knowledge and the learning of my parents. Some disabled persons that do not have knowledge or do not have parents like mine wouldn't get that right. There are a lot of disabled people that don't know their rights.

90. In its 2019 review of Myanmar, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed its concerns about the lack of awareness-raising programs on the rights of persons with disabilities.[43] Many persons with disabilities affirmed the importance of awareness-raising activities in shifting perceptions concerning disabilities. The leader of a disability rights organization said:

> Before we organized all the persons with disabilities in our area, the perception of people was quite bad. When we organized the persons with disabilities, I felt like I was not alone: there are a lot of persons with disabilities in the area. When we formed the [organization], we provided information to people in the area about persons with disabilities, so the perception changed.

[43] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 17.

91. Conditions facing persons with disabilities improved during the decade of civilian government prior to the military coup, according to a person with a disability: "After 2010, there were a lot of disability rights organizations. People started to have knowledge about disabilities. They started to change their behavior. They didn't tease or call us names." He lamented that this progress had reversed in the past four years. "After the coup, we don't have any rights. We can't say that we are disabled or anything. Everything is going backwards."

92. The leader of an organization serving persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur about the difficulties his organization has in getting religious and community leaders to participate in awareness-raising events:

> We do awareness raising and invite … all sectors: pastors, private employers, the families. The poorest of the poor families will attend. The high-profile people will not come to the awareness-raising meetings. So, they have a lack of awareness. It would be very useful to raise awareness, but so far, there is not much involvement from religious [leaders]. They listen to our words as a story, but not more than that.

C. Isolation and dependence

93. The stigma and discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities often leaves them isolated and dependent on family members or other support networks. Many persons with disabilities described difficulties developing and maintaining relationships. Data collected during the 2014 census indicates that persons with disabilities were far less likely to be married than others. Persons with disabilities were also less likely to attend school, work, or have access to amenities or facilities. Young people with disabilities have described their exclusion from protests and other pro-democracy activism in the wake of the coup.

94. Many families avoid discussing the situation of family members with disabilities. In some cases, this involves keeping persons with disabilities hidden from public view, increasing their isolation.

95. Many persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur about their exclusion from weddings, religious celebrations and other events, often because of the notion that attendance by a person with disabilities would be "bad luck" or otherwise inappropriate.

96. A woman with a physical disability from Shan State said:

> People don't like to accept us in social activities. They have donation ceremonies [but we can't participate] because as persons with disabilities it isn't a good omen in the religion.

97. A woman from Rakhine State explained how she was excluded from her sister's wedding because of her disability:

> I wished to be a bridesmaid when my sister got married, but I could not be a bridesmaid because I am disabled. They believe that their marriage would be unlucky if I were a bridesmaid. So, disabled people are not allowed to be bridesmaids.

98. Many persons with disabilities experience greater autonomy in Yangon than elsewhere in the country. This is due, in part, to the greater accessibility of public infrastructure and increased opportunities for education, work and participation in social activities.

99. The junta's violence and oppression have further contributed to the isolation of persons with disabilities since the coup. Armed conflict and the junta's attacks on civilians have displaced many persons with disabilities, separating them from their communities and support networks. Public services and community-based programs have collapsed, leaving many persons with disabilities entirely dependent on support from family members or others in the household. Some family members now play roles in education, rehabilitation and medical care for which they are unqualified. Some persons with disabilities who cannot rely on the support of family members have taken up residence in monasteries.

VII. Armed conflict

100. Persons with disabilities, historically marginalized in Myanmar society, have become all but invisible as attacks on civilians intensify. The consequences of these attacks are even more devastating for persons with disabilities, who are much more likely to be cut off from humanitarian aid and sidelined with respect to protection and peacebuilding initiatives. Armed conflict increases mobility challenges and severs persons with disabilities from support networks. Social stigma also appears to be exacerbated by armed conflict. As communities struggle to navigate violence, displacement and economic hardship, persons with disabilities are increasingly scapegoated as burdens.[44]

A. Violence

101. Armed conflict in Myanmar is driving the number of persons with disabilities upward. As described in the Special Rapporteur's reports to the UN Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly, the junta is responsible for widespread and systematic attacks on civilian populations in Myanmar,[45] launching airstrikes on towns, villages, displacement sites, markets, teashops, mining sites, medical clinics, schools, religious buildings and locations hosting festivals or celebrations. Junta airstrikes usually come without warning and often at night, making it more likely that civilians are unable to flee or take shelter. Shelling by heavy artillery and the use of landmines in populated areas, including by opposition forces, continues to take a heavy toll on civilians.

102. Combatants on all sides of the conflict in Myanmar are suffering high rates of casualties. The junta has demonstrated that it places little to no value on the lives of young people forced into military service as part of the junta's conscription program. Many of these young people have suffered injuries that will lead to lifelong impairment.

103. The Special Rapporteur has received many reports of persons with disabilities being left behind when other community members flee attacks by the junta. People with visual, auditory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments may not receive or process warnings about impending attacks. Deaf people have been killed in airstrikes because they have not been able to hear incoming jets. Persons with mobility impairments are often physically unable to flee with other community members. They also have difficulty quickly getting into bunkers during airstrikes or attacks by heavy artillery. Some have described choosing to remain behind because they fear being a "burden" on family members or neighbors, who are fleeing for their lives. Parents have been forced to make the heartbreaking choice of remaining with a child with a disability or helping the rest of the family flee.

104. Many of those left behind have been killed. According to credible reports received by the Special Rapporteur, the junta has killed at least 117 persons with disabilities since the coup.[46] More than a quarter of these deaths involved persons with disabilities being burned alive when their homes were set on fire in arson attacks by junta forces. The Special Rapporteur has received reports of soldiers torturing persons with disabilities before killing them or mutilating their bodies. In some cases, it appears that junta soldiers have killed persons with intellectual or psychosocial impairments because they have interpreted erratic

[44] For consideration of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of armed conflict, see, Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities," UN Doc. A/76/146, 19 July 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a76146-report-rights-persons-disabilities-context-armed-conflict.

[45] See, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, "Situation of human rights in Myanmar," report to the UN General Assembly, UN Doc. A/79/550, 25 October 2024; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, "Situation of human rights in Myanmar," report to UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/58/64, 14 March 2025.

[46] Human Rights Myanmar, "Killing, torture, and persecution of persons with disabilities in Myanmar," 17 February 2025, https://humanrightsmyanmar.org/killing-torture-and-persecution-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-myanmar/.

or panicked behavior as threatening. Deaf or blind people, or those with difficulties communicating, have been killed apparently because they failed to respond to orders or appeared unresponsive or uncooperative.

105. Persons with disabilities are often terrified when confronted with the need to pass through military checkpoints manned by junta soldiers and members of other armed groups. Those with impaired hearing or communications skills risk being misunderstood, with soldiers believing that they are being evasive or non-compliant with questioning. Junta forces at times have misidentified crutches or assistive devices as weapons, leading to intense interrogation.

B. Landmines and unexploded ordnance

106. For decades, the widespread use of landmines by the Myanmar military and other armed groups has been a major cause of disabilities in Myanmar. Anti-personnel landmines are inherently indiscriminate weapons and pose a risk to civilians even years after they are deployed. Unexploded ordnance, including the mortars used in indiscriminate attacks on villages and IDP sites, also threaten the lives and wellbeing of civilians.

107. There has been a sharp increase in civilian casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance since the February 2021 military coup. This increase has been driven primarily by the expanding footprint of armed conflict in Myanmar, with new landmine contamination in areas that had not previously been affected by fighting. According to the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, in 2023 Myanmar surpassed Syria as the country with the most landmine casualties in the world.[47] According to UN data, 917 people were maimed by landmines and unexploded ordnance in 2024, a new record high, compared to 185 in 2020.[48]

108. Anti-personnel landmines are designed to injure, not kill, and thus often cause lifelong impairment. Loss of feet and legs are the most common injuries associated with landmine incidents. However, those who step on landmines can suffer the loss of hands, hearing or vision. Many victims suffer lasting trauma. Some require sustained physical and psychosocial support.

109. Myanmar is not a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) has documented the new use of antipersonnel landmines by the Myanmar military in every year since it began publishing its Landmine Monitor report in 1999.[49]

110. Mine risk education programs have not reached many areas where landmines have been laid for the first time since the coup. Civilians in these areas are less likely to be aware of the threat posed by landmines. There have been no large-scale demining programs or efforts to clearly mark areas impacted by landmine contamination in Myanmar.

111. Junta forces have intentionally used landmines to harm or displace civilian populations. Community members told the Special Rapporteur that the junta has planted landmines in homes, gardens, rice fields and plantations, around churches and schools, on roads used by civilians, and in bunkers used to protect civilians from junta airstrikes. Soldiers have at times used villagers as human minesweepers, forcing them to walk in front of their units in areas where landmines are suspected to be present.

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[47] International Campaign to Ban Landmines, "Landmine Monitor 2024," November 2024, https://www.the-monitor.org/reports/landmine-monitor-2024.

[48] UNICEF, "Myanmar Landmine & Explosive Ordnance Incident Information (2024)," https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/media/11556/file/Myanmar%20Landmine%20and%20ERW%20Incident%20Information_EN_2024Q4.pdf.pdf; UNICEF, "Landmines / ERW Incidents Information (2020)," https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/media/6306/file/Myanmar%20Landmine-ERW%20Incidents%20Information.pdf.

[49] Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Country Profile – Myanmar, https://www.the-monitor.org/country-profile/myanmar-burma/impact?year=2023.

112. A People's Defense Force member described how he lost his leg after stepping on a landmine while clearing mines in a village. He subsequently received a prosthetic leg and support from the National Unity Government. He explained the hardships he faces as well as his resolve to continue to challenge military dictatorship:

> I was living with two legs for my whole life. Now, even for living or food, it is difficult. I can't go out and buy food for myself. … After I joined the [People's Defense Force], I fought against the military and sacrificed my leg. But I never regretted joining the revolution. … I will stay in the revolution even though I lost my leg. … If the revolution succeeds, I would like to contribute to the development of our country. … I would like [a democratic government] to create job opportunities for persons with disabilities, not only those who sacrificed their bodies for the revolution, but all persons with disabilities. I would like to start a rehabilitation center. Some people are depressed because of the conflict. There are many people that are in a worse situation than me. I would like to help them to rehabilitate themselves.

C. Displacement

113. Hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities have been displaced by armed conflict and the junta's rampant human rights violations.[50] Many have been displaced multiple times. After fleeing their homes, they have had to flee again when displacement camps, host villages or hiding sites come under attack by the junta.

114. Assistive devices have frequently been destroyed by airstrikes, heavy shelling and arson attacks. Some persons with disabilities have been forced to leave assistive devices behind as they flee military attacks.

115. The conditions in sites of displacement can be particularly difficult for persons with disabilities. Many displaced people rely on hunting, foraging or traveling long distances to tend to their farm fields or otherwise obtain food. Clean water often must be retrieved from distant sources. These are major challenges for those with mobility impairments.

116. Displacement camps and hiding sites are often located in hilly or mountainous areas, with steep, uneven and muddy pathways that are challenging or impossible for many persons with mobility or other impairments to navigate. People accustomed to using Braille or easy-to-read materials have challenges receiving and processing information in displacement settings. Toilets and sanitation facilities, when they are available at all, are often inaccessible and lack privacy. A young woman with a physical disability from Rakhine State said:

> While I was living in my home, I had a toilet for my disability. But, when I live [outside] the village, I have no proper toilet. Sometimes I have to go [to the bathroom] in the jungle, and there are a lot of problems because there are other people there, so it's not a safe place for me to use the toilet. … My father tried to build a toilet for me, but it is difficult because the toilet is beside the stream, and to use the toilet I have to cross a bridge. One day, I fell off the bridge, and fortunately my mother saw and saved me. That's why I'm still alive.

117. Persons with disabilities in displacement settings are at increased risk of violence, exclusion, disease, inadequate nutrition and deterioration of their health. Displaced persons with disabilities face many protection concerns, including violence and theft. As described in greater depth below, women and girls with disabilities fear sexual and gender-based violence, which is prevalent in displacement settings. These concerns further heighten the isolation experienced by persons with disabilities.

[50] For consideration of the rights of internally displaced persons with disabilities, see, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, "Persons with disabilities in the context of internal displacement," UN Doc. A/HRC/44/41, 14 May 2020, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4441-persons-disabilities-context-internal-displacement-report.

118. Mass displacement has separated many persons with disabilities from their support networks, including their families, service providers, health care providers, civil society organizations and communities of persons with disabilities. Many persons with disabilities have also been torn away from accessible educational institutions and workplaces. These opportunities are rarely replaced in displacement contexts. A man with a physical disability who was displaced from his village explained:

> In February 2025, there was a conflict … so some villages have been destroyed and many displaced. … Some of the houses of persons with disabilities were destroyed. As you all know, to build a house for a normal person is not easy. But for a person with disabilities to build a house is a struggle. Most of the persons with disabilities who have moved to the new area cannot earn their living. For example, before, some people had a noodle shop, but in the new place they don't know what to do. When they move to a new place, they have to rent a new house and fulfill their basic needs—food, shelter, clothes. So they have to sell their possessions in the new place. Some people, for example, have to sell their kettle [to survive]. So, in some cases the persons with disabilities have nothing in the new places. That is one example of the situation we're facing in 2025.

119. Within displaced communities, and especially those that have experienced indiscriminate attacks by the junta, there is a tremendous need for medical care, rehabilitation services, the provision of prosthetic devices, mental health support and other services. Very few of these needs are being met by humanitarian organizations or local authorities.

D. Conscription

120. In February 2024, the junta initiated a program of conscription under the *People's Military Service Law*. The law exempts persons with permanent disabilities from conscription.[51] However, the Special Rapporteur has received many reports of persons with disabilities being conscripted and forced into military service. Those without visible disabilities, including those with auditory, visual or intellectual impairments are particularly vulnerable to conscription. At times, junta officials require documentation of one's disability in order to secure an exemption from conscription. Many do not possess such documents. In other cases, military officials or local administrators conscript people even when there is no question as to their status as a person with disabilities.

121. A man with a physical disability explained:

> There are a lot of examples of persons with disabilities being recruited into the military. Some of these persons with disabilities were taken as porters, even though some of their parents complained. … In our country we don't have proper registration for disability. [H]earing impaired people are recruited into the military. The military didn't accept their explanation. They think that those with a hearing impairment can take some role in the military. Not only [persons with] hearing impairments, but some visible impairments, are facing forced portering and recruitment into the military. This is one of the biggest threats to the disabled community in Myanmar.

122. The fear of conscription further isolates persons with disabilities and impairs their access to humanitarian aid and essential services. Sometimes family members without disabilities are fearful of assisting persons with disabilities to travel or seek medical care because of a worry they might be conscripted.

[51] People's Military Service Law, 4 November 2010, art. 22(c), https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs16/2010-SPDC_Law2010-27-Peoples_Military_Service_Law-en.pdf.

VIII. Accessibility of infrastructure, transportation and information

123. In Myanmar, public spaces, buildings and transportation networks remain largely inaccessible to persons with disabilities, especially outside major cities. Persons with disabilities also have difficulty accessing information, increasing their isolation and limiting their access to services and humanitarian aid.

124. The 2020 *Myanmar National Building Code* mandates that all public buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities, setting out minimum standards for various types of buildings.[52] The code includes rules on accessible parking spots, the width of entrances, doors and hallways, floor materials, handrails, signage, ramps, stairs and toilets, among other specifications. Buildings constructed prior to 2020 generally do not comply with its standards, and it is unclear what efforts, if any, the junta has made to enforce the code since the coup.

125. Despite the requirements of the *Myanmar National Building Code*, government offices, hospitals, schools, markets, banks and other public spaces often lack ramps or elevators, making them inaccessible for wheelchair users and others with mobility impairments. Hallways and doorways are often too narrow to accommodate persons using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Buildings often lack handrails, accessible toilets, Braille signage and other adaptations that facilitate access and ease of use by persons with disabilities. Many polling stations used during elections are not accessible by persons with disabilities.

126. The 2015 *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* empowers the National Committee on the Rights of Disabled People to promote accessibility and mobility for persons with disabilities, including by issuing directives and developing models to improve the accessibility of buildings and public spaces.[53] However, it is not clear if the National Committee has taken any significant steps to improve the accessibility of buildings since the coup.

127. A man with a mobility impairment who is unable to ascend stairs told the Special Rapporteur about the physical barriers he faces in his everyday life:

> They do not say, "You are not welcome in church". But the Church is not accessible. … They have a capacity-building training on the second floor, and persons with disabilities cannot attend. … The meeting rooms across Myanmar are not good for people with impairments.

128. In Myanmar, houses and other dwellings, especially those following traditional designs, are inaccessible to many persons with disabilities, deepening their social isolation. A woman who uses a wheelchair explained:

> At the entrances of most homes, there are wooden door frames, sills or concrete barriers, two to three feet high, that obstruct wheelchair users from entering. … Wheelchair users often require assistance from others, making social life challenging for me. This prevents me from visiting other houses. While a step may seem insignificant to non-disabled people, for a wheelchair user, it can feel as insurmountable as Mount Meru [a central and sacred mountain in Buddhist cosmology]. Additionally, the traditional floor or squat toilets commonly found in Myanmar homes are not suitable for wheelchair users.

129. Sidewalks in Myanmar are often uneven, obstructed or lacking curb ramps. Pedestrian crossings rarely have auditory signals or tactile guides.

130. Myanmar's public transport systems by-and-large lack adaptations to allow for access by persons with disabilities. In Yangon and other cities, most buses are older models without

[52] Myanmar National Building Code, 2020, https://myanmar-law-library.org/spip.php?page=pdfjs&id_document=1567, section 2.7, "Accessibility."

[53] The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, 2015, para. 28.

low-floor entry or wheelchair lifts. Trains usually have high steps and narrow doors, and train stations present accessibility challenges to persons with disabilities. At times, staff or passengers assist persons with disabilities to access buses, trains or boats that are otherwise inaccessible.

131. A disability rights activist who uses a wheelchair described her experience with the public transportation system in Myanmar:

> Some taxi drivers do not want to take wheelchair users, as it creates extra work for them. They have to carry and store the wheelchair in the boot and assist the wheelchair user, which takes time. As a result, most drivers do not wish to carry me. Traveling to other regions by express bus is also a significant challenge. Some express buses have steps, so I have to crawl to reach my seat. Additionally, I have to pay an extra fee for my wheelchair. Under the NLD government, the Ministry issued a directive prohibiting extra charges for wheelchairs, but now no one follows these regulations. I also have to plan ahead for toilet accessibility during my journey. To avoid needing to urinate on the way, I reduce my water drinking a day in advance. Moreover, Yangon's YBS buses once had audio assistance and designated spaces for wheelchair users, but after the coup, all of these accommodations disappeared.

132. Even if they can access public transportation, inflation, which has skyrocketed since the coup, has put bus, train and taxi fares beyond the reach of many persons with disabilities. Nightly curfews, checkpoints and travel restrictions imposed by the junta and opposition armed groups also disproportionately impact persons with disabilities.

133. A man from Yangon Region with a physical disability described how transportation challenges have affected many aspects of his life:

> For me, the biggest challenge due to my disability is transportation. Because I have to use crutches, it is not convenient to take the bus. I missed some job opportunities due to transportation. If there's an opportunity, … I have to walk. … I must choose a job that is very close to my home or in my area. This was also a challenge when I was in school, since I had to use buses. This made a lot of difficulties for my studies.

134. While persons with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing buildings, transportation and public infrastructure everywhere in Myanmar, these obstacles are especially onerous in small towns and rural areas. Dirt roads, substandard buildings, rudimentary toilets and hygiene facilities, and the lack of electricity pose particular challenges. Persons with disabilities also report that people are more understanding and more likely to help them navigate accessibility challenges in Yangon than elsewhere.[54]

135. An amputee living in Kayah State described how he is unable to participate in the animist traditions practiced by his community because of transportation challenges:

> Because my leg was amputated, I can't completely follow the animist beliefs. … We have an annual prediction ceremony. … We have to go to the forest [for the ceremony]. They will predict what the future will be. Due to my disability, I cannot join that ceremony. … I can't go very far.

136. As described above, armed conflict and the junta's indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas have only increased mobility challenges for persons with disabilities. Damaged bridges and roads create barriers for those with mobility impairments.

137. Access to information is a major challenge for persons with disabilities, made far worse by the junta's crackdown on freedom of expression since the coup. The junta has imposed widespread internet and telecommunications blackouts impacting millions of people. It has arrested and prosecuted activists, journalists and ordinary citizens for criticizing the junta or sharing information online. The junta has blocked websites and social media

[54] See, Dilshan L. Fernando, Helani Galpaya, Gayani Hurulle and Catherine Mobley, "Disability and Place of Living: Experiences of Disability, Accessibility, and Inequality in Four Regions of Myanmar," *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, volume 25, issue 1, 19 June 2023, p. 170–182.

platforms, including Facebook, which is a primary means of communicating and sharing information in Myanmar. It has cracked down on the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) to circumvent online censorship and surveillance, searching people's phones for VPN applications and using new technology to block VPN use. In January 2025, the junta imposed a Cybersecurity Law that consolidated many of the most restrictive elements of the junta's policies concerning digital rights, including by banning unauthorized VPN usage.

138. The junta's draconian restrictions on online freedom of expression have compounded the isolation and dependence experienced by many persons with disabilities, who often have difficulty accessing information or communicating through traditional channels. Many persons with disabilities rely heavily on digital platforms to receive news, socialize, work and access various forms of support. Facebook is the primary means through which many persons with disabilities receive information and interact with others.

139. Information intended for public consumption, whether distributed by state or private outlets, is generally not available in accessible formats and technologies. Written materials are rarely available in Braille and easy-to-read formats. Some humanitarian organizations have taken commendable steps to ensure that materials are available in accessible formats or that reasonable accommodations are made to help persons with disabilities access information about available services. For example, some agencies have used sign language interpreters or home visits to convey information to potential beneficiaries. However, many persons with disabilities still report challenges relating to information accessibility.

140. In March 2025, United Nations Population Fund published the results of an accessibility audit of service facilities it supports through its Women and Girls First Programme.[55] The audit is a positive example of efforts to ensure that humanitarian programs are inclusive of persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the audit also identified significant shortcomings in the accessibility of information and communications relating to these projects. For example, very few of these facilities—which include women and girls' centres, clinics and safe houses—provide materials in Braille or large print, and sign language interpretation or captioning is rarely available.

141. The divergence of sign language practice in Myanmar impedes communication for persons with hearing difficulties. Two languages—Yangon Sign Language and Mandalay Sign Language—are widely used but have significant differences. The Japan International Cooperation Agency and Japan Foundation for the Deaf have previously assisted the Myanmar government in the standardization of Myanmar Sign Language, but this language has not been widely adopted. There are very limited numbers of sign language interpreters in Myanmar, severely limiting the ability of persons with hearing impairments to receive information.

142. In the post-coup context, the inaccessibility of information by persons with disabilities can have devastating consequences. As described in the preceding section, many persons with disabilities have been killed, injured or detained because they did not receive or understand warnings about impending attacks by junta forces. Persons with disabilities report that they cannot access information about available complaints mechanisms, negatively impacting their access to justice. Persons with disabilities also report difficulties accessing political news, creating barriers to their participation in processes concerning peacebuilding, nation-building and transitional justice. As described below, poor access to information also prevents persons with disabilities from accessing humanitarian aid and other forms of support.

[55] UNFPA and Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, "Accessibility Audit in Women and Girls First Programme Targeted States and Regions in Myanmar," 21 March 2025, https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/publications/accessibility-audit-women-and-girls-first-programme-targeted-states-and-regions.

IX. Health and rehabilitation

A. Access to health care

143. Persons with disabilities in Myanmar face numerous challenges in accessing essential health care. These challenges include physical, financial and informational barriers that have been exacerbated by armed conflict and the junta's human rights violations following the 2021 military coup.

144. The public health system in Myanmar effectively collapsed after the military coup. Thousands of doctors and nurses joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, leaving many facilities severely understaffed. The junta issued arrest warrants for health care workers who set up independent clinics or saw patients in opposition-controlled areas. Services in many public hospitals have been drastically cut.

145. The junta has repeatedly attacked hospitals and medical clinics in opposition-controlled areas, including with airstrikes and shelling by heavy artillery. Insecurity Insight recorded 308 attacks on health care—including the destruction or occupation of health buildings and the killing or arrest of health workers—in 2024.[56] The junta has also blockaded the delivery of medicines and medical devices into opposition-controlled areas.

146. Many civil society and community-based health initiatives have been forced to terminate programs because of security threats and the junta's crackdown on civil society after the coup. Telecommunications restrictions imposed by the junta have impeded access to promising telehealth programs.

147. The limited availability and accessibility of health and rehabilitation services in post-coup Myanmar has significantly impacted persons with disabilities.

148. The lack of physical proximity to health care facilities is one of the greatest barriers to treatment for persons with disabilities. Some persons with disabilities who live in ethnic areas or border regions told the Special Rapporteur that the treatment they need is only available in major cities, such as Yangon or Mandalay. While travel distance is a barrier for the general population, persons with disabilities face the additional burden of the lack of accessibility and affordability of transportation.

149. These burdens have worsened considerably since the coup. Travel barriers, including checkpoints and impassable roads and bridges, impede access to health care for persons with disabilities. Newly injured people, including victims of attacks by the junta, have at times been stopped at checkpoints or have been otherwise unable to reach medical care, increasing the likelihood that they develop lifelong impairments.

150. Many persons with disabilities and their family members report not seeking the treatment they require because of security concerns. Some fear that they would be arrested while traveling from an opposition-controlled area to a major city controlled by the junta to access health care. Disability rights advocates described to the Special Rapporteur how young men with a disability, such as an amputated leg, were often assumed to be resistance combatants and therefore have an increased risk of arrest and detention.

151. Persons with disabilities have reportedly died because of junta blockades of medicines and food to opposition-controlled areas.

152. Those who can reach health care facilities still face many barriers in accessing quality care. These include the physical inaccessibility of facilities, lack of access to information, communication difficulties, financial constraints and the scarcity of specialized services.

153. Most hospitals and clinics in Myanmar are not designed to accommodate patients with disabilities. Many health care facilities lack ramps, and multi-story government hospitals often lack elevators. They frequently have narrow hallways and lack accessible toilets. Most

[56] Insecurity Insight, "Myanmar: Violence Against Health Care in Conflict 2024," https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2024-SHCC-Myanmar.pdf.

hospitals do not have sign language interpreters and health care information is generally not available in accessible formats.

154. Health care services are often economically inaccessible to persons with disabilities, who are disproportionately poor. Many cannot afford transportation to hospitals, clinics or other care facilities. A disability rights advocate with a physical disability said:

> Because we don't have enough income, it is very difficult for us to go to the clinic. … I can cover my basic needs, but if I have a problem with my health, I cannot access the clinic because of the high price. [P]ersons with disabilities are losing their lives without access to healthcare clinics.

155. Myanmar's health care system offers little in the way of specialized care for persons with disabilities. Many health care providers lack training or awareness regarding the unique requirements of persons with disabilities. Some reportedly exhibit the stigmas and discriminatory attitudes that are prevalent in the general population. Communications gaps can lead to misdiagnoses or misunderstandings between persons with disabilities and their health care providers.

B. Rehabilitation and assistive devices

156. In 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about inadequate rehabilitation services and persons with disabilities' lack of access to assistive devices in Myanmar. These concerns have been exacerbated by displacement and the collapse of the public health system following the coup. Meanwhile, demand for rehabilitation services and assistive devices has skyrocketed as armed conflict and the junta's attacks on civilians have injured thousands, many of whom will have lifelong impairments.

157. Many persons with disabilities cannot access the assistance they require. Services for persons with disabilities, including physical therapy, cognitive rehabilitation, speech therapy and occupational therapy have historically been concentrated in urban areas. Persons with disabilities living in smaller towns, rural areas and conflict zones have had difficulty accessing such services. These barriers to care have grown considerably since the coup, as travel to large cities has become impossible for many people in opposition-controlled areas. The need for rehabilitation services and assistive devices is particularly high among populations displaced by armed conflict, who have borne the brunt of the junta's attacks.

158. Many devices, or their constituent components, must be imported and are prohibitively expensive for most persons with disabilities. Military checkpoints and import limitations introduce further distribution challenges. In many areas, the only devices available are those that can be produced locally, such as crutches, braces and rudimentary prosthetics. The Special Rapporteur learned that many persons with disabilities who require crutches, but cannot access them, are forced to fashion their own crude crutches using bamboo sticks. Hearing aids for persons with auditory impairments are rare and require batteries and maintenance that can be hard to secure.

159. The leader of a disability rights organization described the challenges accessing assistive devices and the impact on persons with disabilities:

> Persons with disabilities have a lot of challenges accessing [assistive devices]. … For example, if there are ten [people] that need a wheelchair, we can only support two to access them. … Without these assistance devices, they cannot enter public spaces and have to stay at home instead, where they are isolated.

160. Some persons with disabilities report that they require wheelchairs for their daily lives but are unable to use them in their communities because the roads or pathways are not conducive. Those who have been displaced are especially likely to face these kinds of challenges.

161. Many persons with disabilities have had to leave behind assistive devices when fleeing armed conflict or attacks by the junta. Wheelchairs, prosthetic devices and other assistive devices have also been confiscated by junta forces at checkpoints.

162. A woman who lost her leg after stepping on a landmine laid by junta soldiers just outside of her home told the Special Rapporteur that she could not get a prosthetic limb. This was making it extremely difficult to support her family. Her doctor told the Special Rapporteur that she was unable to access a prosthesis because the junta was blocking the delivery of the materials needed to produce them.

163. Some of those injured by landmines and the junta's attacks have received treatment in neighboring countries. The Special Rapporteur spoke with those who were injured by junta attacks in conflict zones in Myanmar and were transported across Myanmar's borders to receive treatment, including amputations. Many received prosthetic devices from clinics or organizations operating in neighboring countries. Many persons who are dealing with new disabling impairments have been able to receive long-term shelter, sustenance and support in safe houses or care facilities in neighboring countries.

164. The National Unity Government has provided health care, rehabilitation services and prosthetics or other assistive devices to many People's Defense Forces soldiers who have been injured in the conflict.

C. Mental health

165. Persons with disabilities face many of the same stressors as other people affected by armed conflict and the junta's oppression. Constant fear of airstrikes or shelling by junta forces are a particular cause of mental health struggles for persons with disabilities, who are cognizant that they may not be able to flee or protect themselves. A woman with a physical disability from Rakhine State said:

> All of my family members have to go out and look for vegetables and fruit in the jungle. I am the only one left at home. After I received news about the rape of a woman with a disability [in my area], I felt insecure. And when I hear the sound of planes flying overhead, I cannot control myself. I am totally depressed. When I am with my family, I am encouraged because we are facing difficulties together. But, when there is no one, and I am left alone and hearing the sounds of the [planes], I am totally scared. These kinds of psychological effects stay in my mind. … Drones are everywhere, and we don't know where the bomb from the drone will be coming. … The scariest things are the jet fighters. We don't know when they will drop the bombs.

166. Many persons with disabilities suffer from a belief that they are a burden on their families or communities. Repeated displacement, economic hardship, fears about conscription, prolonged isolation, and the experience of discrimination are some of the other factors contributing to mental health challenges.

167. People experiencing new impairments often have difficulties adjusting to their new life and changed expectations for their lives moving forward. Many experience extreme distress because they perceive they will have few education and work opportunities. A man who lost his leg when he stepped on a landmine said:

> I never imagined in my life that I would be a disabled person. This creates a lot of obstacles for my future and my goals. I am still considering what I should do [with my life]. It really impacts my ability. In the past, I was not wealthy, but I had my own house and field. Now I have nothing because of Min Aung Hlaing. I lost everything, including my leg. I am feeling very sad. I cannot express with words how I am feeling now. I lost everything in my life. I have nothing. I have a dream that in the future, I would like to support disabled people, including visually disabled people and support the mental health [of persons with disabilities]. But I am still struggling myself.

168. Given their mental health challenges, some persons with disabilities have committed or attempted suicide.

169. Trauma and stress also impact the families of persons with disabilities. Households with persons with disabilities are far more likely than other households to experience serious mental health challenges, according to surveys conducted in Myanmar.

170. There is a shortage of mental health professionals in Myanmar, and very few are trained to assist persons with disabilities. Many of the mental health services available to persons with disabilities are delivered by local organizations for persons with disabilities. Those providing such services are often the organization's staff or volunteers, rather than mental health professionals.

171. Many persons with disabilities avoid seeking psychosocial support because they fear that service providers will not understand the challenges they face or will have a discriminatory attitude. Communication barriers also impede mental health services for many persons with disabilities.

172. Those who can access mental health services, however, often report that they are beneficial. A former People's Defense Force member who was injured by heavy artillery shelling described receiving services from an international organization:

> At first, I was very concerned after I knew that my leg was amputated. I had a lot of concerns about my future and also faced a lot of difficulty. But [I received] training, including about mental health and how to use the prosthesis and how to get exercise. … And to see the support from abroad, this also inspired us to face our difficulties. Sometimes we watched online videos about how people proceed with their lives with a prosthetic leg. This inspired us. They are using the prosthetic leg, but they also [go on with their lives in] the future. This was an inspiration and motivation for me.

173. Some persons with disabilities, despite mental health challenges, told the Special Rapporteur how they found meaning in assisting others with disabilities or contributing to the pro-democracy movement in Myanmar. A former People's Defense Force soldier told the Special Rapporteur how he was injured in an accident while preparing drones to attack junta forces. The bombs affixed to the drone exploded minutes before takeoff, injuring his leg and killing his younger brother. After his leg was amputated, the man struggled to cope with the loss of his brother and adjust to his new life as a person with a disability. He described the routine challenges in his everyday life and how injured pro-democracy fighters face pervasive discrimination. He told the Special Rapporteur about mental health challenges that he has overcome to find new meaning in his life:

> I have a bitter experience and a bad story in my past. When I was in the resistance force and my brother passed away and I lost my leg, I was thinking why death did not take me. I had some mental problems. I tried to commit suicide three times. The last time I took cyanide. But I survived. … I kept asking why death didn't take me away. I had to examine myself. I went to counseling to rehabilitate my mental health. I had to take one-and-a-half years to rehabilitate my mind.

174. The man has started an organization that supports injured opposition fighters by facilitating medical care and providing vocational opportunities. He explained, "I am participating in this movement because I lost my leg and cannot fight in the battlefield. I accept my situation. But I think how I can be involved and contribute to this revolution. I want the revolution to be successful as soon as possible."

X. Access to opportunity

A. Education

175. Children and other persons with disabilities face high barriers when trying to access education. Stigma and discrimination, inaccessible classrooms, the lack of support services and specialized teaching materials, and the poor awareness and capacity of teachers, among other challenges, severely limit the educational opportunities of persons with disabilities.

176. According to data collected during the 2014 census, children with disabilities were far less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities.[57] Only 13 percent of women

[57] *2014 Census: Thematic Report on Disability*, p. 52-55.

and 24 percent of men with disabilities had completed high school, compared to 30 percent and 40 percent, respectively, of those without disabilities.[58] The disparity among achievement in higher education was even greater.[59] Persons with disabilities were nearly three times as likely to be illiterate compared to those without a disability.[60] Available reports from the 2024 census do not provide comparable data, but disability rights organizations confirm that children with disabilities continue to face incredibly high barriers to education.

177. The 2014 National Education Law commits the Myanmar government to provide "special education programs and services" for students with disabilities.[61] The law requires the government to set up "specialized instructional programs" and oversee the operation of privately-run schools for persons with disabilities.[62] Notably, the law does not include provisions to require integrated educational opportunities for students with disabilities in the least restrictive educational settings.

178. The government reportedly runs two schools for blind students, two schools for deaf students, and two schools for students with intellectual and physical disabilities, as well as a "Disabled Care Center" and school for adult persons with disabilities.[63] Little is known about the operation of these schools since the coup. Private organizations reportedly also run schools that are exclusively for children with disabilities. The capacity of these schools is extremely small.

179. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities raised concerns that Myanmar's legislative framework, by addressing the requirements of children with disabilities exclusively through the establishment of specialized schools, has created a segregated education system.[64] This has undoubtedly been born out in the experience of children with disabilities, who often face insurmountable barriers in accessing the mainstream education system.

180. Physical infrastructure in schools is a major impediment for children with disabilities. Many schools lack ramps, accessible bathrooms and appropriate classroom layouts, effectively preventing children with disabilities from attending. Children with disabilities are often not provided with adequate accommodations to take examinations in school.

181. Communication barriers also impede learning by children with disabilities. Few schools have learning materials in accessible formats, including Braille, audio recordings or easy-to-read text. Schools lack assistive devices for those with visual and hearing impairments. Teachers largely lack the training and skills necessary to communicate with persons with disabilities or to provide the assistance that they may need for their education. Children with disabilities sometimes report discriminatory attitudes by teachers, administrators and fellow students, which can turn into bullying.

182. A man with a hearing impairment explained his experience with secondary and higher education:

> My disability started at age 15. In the class, when I first [lost my hearing], I didn't understand what the teacher was teaching, so I had to look at some of the students'

[58] *Id.*, p. 60.

[59] *Ibid*. 2.8 percent of women with disabilities have completed higher education, compared to 10.9 percent of women without disabilities. 3.7 percent of men with disabilities had completed higher education, compared to 9.5 percent of men without disabilities.

[60] *Id*., p. 55. 16.9 percent of men with disabilities are illiterate, compared to 6.8 percent of men without disabilities. 31.7 percent of women with disabilities are illiterate, compared to 11.9 percent of women without disabilities.

[61] National Education Law, 2014, article 4, https://myanmar-law-library.org/law-library/laws-and-regulations/laws/myanmar-laws-1988-until-now/union-solidarity-and-development-party-laws-2012-2016/myanmar-laws-2014/pyidaungsu-hluttaw-law-no-41-2014-national-education-law-burmese-and-english.html.

[62] *Id*., article 37.

[63] Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, "Caring for Persons with Disabilities," https://www.dsw.gov.mm/en/node/2250 (accessed 7 May 2025).

[64] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 45.

> books to see what they were writing and what they were doing, and I had to follow them. My teacher asked me to write what she said, but I could not hear her. Sometimes the teacher misunderstood me, because she could not understand why I was not writing when she asked me to write what she said. … At the university, I [also] faced a lot of difficulty especially in communication. … Some of [the lecturers] complained to me, 'Why are you joining university if you have a hearing disability?'

183. Several persons with disabilities reported to the Special Rapporteur that they were denied educational opportunities for which they were qualified, including admission to university faculties. A woman who lost her hand in an accident as a teenager recalled how she had to give up her hope of being a dentist after being rejected from dental school because of her disability:

> The total mark I received [on my entrance exam] is 452, so I should have been able to join the university to study dental medicine. But I could not join [because of my disability], so I had to join the education college, and I studied history and geography. … I would like to have equal opportunity, especially for education. [In Myanmar], we have a stereotype ideology. Disabled people have to stay at home. We are not allowed to go to school. Some people think that if disabled people go to school and are literate, then what will they do? We face a lot of discrimination at school and that affects our opportunities.

184. Children with disabilities have been held back from educational opportunities because of discrimination by their own families. Parents have at times discouraged or prevented children with disabilities from pursuing secondary or higher education. The education of siblings without disabilities is often prioritized over schooling for children with disabilities, who are believed to have less earning potential in the future.

185. Since the coup, conflict, displacement and the hollowing out of the state education system have further undermined access to education by children with disabilities. Many teachers, including some with experience teaching children with disabilities, left the formal education system as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Students have also stopped attending government schools as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

186. Disability rights advocates report that many policies and practices to promote inclusive education under the previous civilian government—such as providing examination support and interpretation services—have been shelved since the coup. After the departure of skilled teachers who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement, many of the teachers who remained were reportedly unaware of policies to promote inclusion in schools, leaving students with disabilities to improvise their own accommodations. In some cases, new school administrators have rolled back accommodations for students with disabilities or displayed discriminatory attitudes.

187. Security concerns are a major constraint on access to education by children with disabilities following the coup. The junta has regularly targeted schools with airstrikes and heavy artillery shelling. Junta soldiers have often stationed themselves at schools, leading families to keep children with disabilities away from school. In 2021, soldiers reportedly occupied a school for blind students in Yangon, prohibiting dozens of students from leaving the premises.

188. Many of the networks and organizations that previously helped children with disabilities to access educational opportunities have collapsed because of security threats and funding challenges. For many children, education has shifted to home-based, community-based or online education. However, these modalities are not accessible to some children with disabilities. Junta-imposed telecommunication restrictions and electricity blackouts have also limited the reach of online-learning programs, which are often the most conducive for some children with disabilities.

B. Work

189. Persons with disabilities struggle to secure and maintain meaningful employment because of pervasive discrimination, accessibility challenges, the lack of reasonable accommodations by employers and limited training opportunities.

190. The 2014 census found that labor force participation rates were far lower for persons with disabilities than those without disabilities.[65] For example, only 23 percent of those with moderate or severe impairment of their ability to walk were employed, compared to 68 percent of persons without such impairment. Labor force participation rates for women with disabilities were significantly lower than for men. There have been few efforts to collect nationwide data on employment of persons with disabilities since the 2014 census. In its 2019 concluding remarks, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about the lack of data collection efforts in this area. Available reports from the 2024 census did not address the employment of persons with disabilities.

191. Under the 2015 *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, employers are prohibited from discriminating against persons with disabilities in their hiring and employment practices.[66] They are also required to report the number of persons with disabilities they have hired to township labor offices and meet quotas in such hiring set by the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

192. Despite the requirements of the 2015 law, persons with disabilities face pervasive discrimination in hiring practices. Many feel that they are judged merely based on their disability rather than their skills, experience or capacity. A woman who lost a hand in an accident as a teenager described the challenges she has faced trying to find work:

> Some people have the concept that I am not capable of anything. They say, 'Don't put her on the list because she doesn't have the capability.' When I apply for a job, they say, 'You don't have one hand, how can you work?' They don't look at my CV, they just look at my appearance. They say, because of your disability you can't be my employee. They just decide based on my physical appearance, not my qualifications.

193. Some businesses outright refuse to employ persons with disabilities, reflecting the pervasive stigma attached to disability in Myanmar society. A woman with a physical disability said, "Even after I graduated from university, I faced discrimination. Employers didn't want to offer me a job, even though I can use a computer and I'm educated and can speak different languages. We are left behind because of our disability."

194. A man with a physical disability from Mandalay Region said:

> In our community, discrimination is very powerful, so we lose a lot of opportunities, including job opportunities. If the employer gives a place to a person with a disability, they feel it is a burden. To create an accessible workplace, they have to spend some money. That is why we lost a lot of opportunities in the workplace as well. … There is one policy that employers still use as a criteria for job applications: The applicant should be strong and healthy. That is one of the difficulties for persons with disabilities. They don't recognize our capability.

195. Many persons with disabilities report that they have been rejected for government posts for which they were qualified merely because of their disability. Job descriptions posted on government websites sometimes contain a requirement that applicants have "good health." It is assumed that healthy persons with disabilities cannot have "good health". Persons with disabilities are often restricted to lower-level government positions and not given the opportunity to take on more senior roles. A woman with a physical disability described her experience:

> After I graduated, I tried to apply to be a clerk in the government medical office. I was denied because of my disability, but they selected another person who does not have

[65] 2014 Census, Thematic Report on Disability, p. 66.

[66] Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, section 36.

> the computer skills or language abilities [that I have]. … But he was selected because he was a 'normal person.' I have an ambition to be a teacher. I tried to apply and went to get the application form from the office, but I was not given the form because of my disability. So, I cannot officially become a teacher.

196. During the post-coup economic downturn, persons with disabilities were often among the first to lose their jobs. The challenging economic environment further tightened the job market for person with disabilities, who already faced an uphill battle in the search for work. Some businesses have reportedly stopped proactively collaborating with organizations for persons with disabilities in their hiring practices. A man from Mandalay Region described the situation after the coup:

> We have few opportunities for jobs. In the past, we were independent, but now it is very difficult because of the lack of job opportunities. We have to rely on others. Most of the vocational training has been shut down. … There are some factories that have shut down or reduced the number of employees. People with disabilities are the first ones to be dismissed. They fire them first, due to the situation.

197. Persons with disabilities report that employers automatically assume employees with disabilities will underperform. Persons with disabilities are often, therefore, not given responsibilities or opportunities available to others. Many employers reportedly offer lower wages to persons with disabilities than offered to others for performing the same tasks. Some persons with disabilities have been required to work in exploitative or dangerous conditions.

198. Persons with disabilities report that the workplace environment changed for the worse after the coup and that they no longer feel comfortable advocating for inclusive and accessible workplaces.

199. Under the by-laws to the 2015 *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, employers are required to "reasonably accommodate" employees with disabilities. However, the accessibility of workplaces and lack of accommodations for persons with disabilities is a major impediment for persons with disabilities seeking work. As described above, limited accessibility in transportation also severely limits employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

200. Given the high barriers to formal employment, many persons with disabilities choose to run their own small businesses. Many have become massage therapists or street vendors, while others sing or busk in public spaces. Business owners with disabilities face many challenges. Some report that they have trouble accessing loans. Others have been targeted by criminals who exploit their disability. For example, blind massage therapists, who often work and travel alone, have been robbed or otherwise exploited during home visits.

201. Data from the 2014 Census indicated that less than 2,500 out of more than 1.5 million persons with disabilities had received vocational training.[67] No more recent data is available concerning access to vocational training by persons with disabilities. The 2015 *Law on the Rights or Persons with Disabilities* mandates the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to set up vocational training programs for persons with disabilities.[68] Schools set up by the government for children and adults with disabilities provide training in areas such as electronics, computers, tailoring, photography, painting and massage. Private programs run by international organizations, organizations for persons with disabilities and the National Unity Government, including in neighboring countries, also provide vocational training. However, these programs do not meet the demand for vocational training and are not available in many parts of the country. Persons with disabilities often find that, even when they are able to access vocational training programs, those programs fail to prepare them for employment opportunities. Some vocational training programs have reportedly shut down since the coup.

[67] 2014 Census, Thematic Report on Disability, p. 64.

[68] Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, section 35(b).

C. Financial hardship

202. Given their lack of educational and work opportunities and the pervasive discrimination in Myanmar society, persons with disabilities often face severe financial hardship. In its 2019 concluding observations, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about the "high rate of poverty and deprivation" experienced by persons with disabilities.[69]

203. After growing 27 percent from 2015 to 2019, Myanmar's economy shrunk by nine percent from 2020 to 2024. The World Bank predicts that it will shrink further in 2025. Runaway inflation has also imposed severe hardships on Myanmar's population. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the country's economic collapse.

204. A 2024 nationwide survey of displaced and crisis-affected households found that the median household income was 20 to 25 percent lower for households with persons with disabilities. Three quarters of households with persons with disabilities claimed they were unable to meet even half of their basic needs. These households are more likely to adopt negative coping strategies, including drawing down household savings, selling equipment they use for their livelihoods, consuming less food and forgoing medical treatment.

205. The financial hardship faced by persons with disabilities and their families results in other forms of deprivation. Households containing persons with disabilities are more likely to live in makeshift shelters and have unmet health care needs. They are less likely to have access to clean water, improved sanitation facilities, electricity, internet and motorized transportation.

206. A man with a hearing disability described the current situation for persons with disabilities:

> Most of the factories were shut down, and the job opportunities for the disabled people are very few. … So most disabled people are asking for food and money on the side of the road. Especially in Yangon, a lot of the job opportunities are gone. People are jobless, so they have to sell their bodies [for sex work]. Most of the disabled [people] are not the owners of their houses, so they have to pay the rent. The situation has made it difficult to find a regular income, so they have to earn money in any way they can.

207. For many persons with disabilities who are self-employed or small business owners, the conditions in post-coup Myanmar have made it extremely hard to earn a living. Oppressive policies imposed by the junta have compounded the challenges caused by a failing economy. A man with a physical disability who works independently as a motorbike mechanic described the hardships he is facing:

> The inflation rate is very high. I run my own business providing spare materials for motorcycles and repairing motorbikes. Before the coup, if you invested 100,000 kyat, then you could earn enough to cover living costs. Now, the investment per month has increased. … I think whether I need to close the business. I don't have a lot of job opportunities if I close my business. … I have to worry every day about whether I can provide support to my own family. … In our area, there are a lot of restrictions and arrests. Some restrictions include that you cannot ride a bike without permission. This impacted me and my business. I have been running my business for nearly ten years, so it is difficult for me to change to a new career. … Sometimes I feel hopeless. I think also that if I want to change businesses, I cannot find work that would be convenient and would earn me a profit.

XI. Women and girls with disabilities

208. In Myanmar, persons with disabilities have multiple identities—including those related to gender, ethnicity and religion—which can increase the risk of discrimination on

[69] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 53.

multiple fronts. In its 2019 concluding observations on Myanmar, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities raised concerns about "multiple and intersectional discrimination against women and girls with disabilities," highlighting, in particular, discrimination against those belonging to ethnic or religious minorities.[70] The intersectional discrimination experienced by women and girls with disabilities contributes to adverse impacts on their health, social lives and economic wellbeing.

209. Data from 2014 and 2024 censuses as well as other surveys indicate a slightly higher prevalence of disabilities among women than men in Myanmar. Females with disabilities are less likely to complete secondary or tertiary education, less likely to be employed, less likely to receive support from the government and NGOs, and more likely to be illiterate.

210. Women and girls with disabilities face heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Those with mobility impairments have limited options when seeking to escape attacks or threats of attack. Perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence may believe that women and girls with intellectual, psychosocial or communication impairments will be less likely to report attacks or less likely to be believed if they do.

211. As described above, persons with disabilities have often been left behind when community members flee an attack by junta soldiers. Women and girls who are unable to flee have at times been raped by junta soldiers. Women and girls with disabilities, in particular those who have been displaced, also face the risk of sexual and gender-based violence by individuals within their communities. The fear of sexual and gender-based violence is a constant stressor for many women and girls with disabilities.

212. Survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Myanmar have historically faced extreme challenges securing access to justice for many reasons, including poor rule of law, fear of reprisals and stigmatization.[71] These challenges have increased considerably since the coup. With the military junta exercising tight control over Myanmar's police force and courts, accountability through the formal justice system is exceedingly rare and, in cases where soldiers or police officers are the perpetrators, is impossible.

213. Myanmar's legal framework does not adequately protect women and girls, including those with disabilities, from exploitation and gender-based violence. Efforts to pass a *Prevention of Violence Against Women Law* stalled under the previous civilian government.

214. In displacement settings, women and girls with disabilities face considerable hardships and risks. Inadequate sanitation and bathing facilities raise concerns about privacy and health.

215. Women and girls with disabilities often face multiple barriers in accessing services, including those relating to sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and psychosocial support. These include stigma and discrimination, transportation challenges, inaccessible facilities, high costs, inadequate training of service providers, and limited participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. Disability rights advocates report a shortage of female rehabilitation professionals, compounding women and girl's lack of access to care.

XII. Refugee populations

216. Decades of armed conflict and rampant human rights violations have pushed many people, including those with disabilities, across Myanmar's borders and into neighboring

[70] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 13.

[71] See, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, "Courage amid Crisis: Gendered Impacts of the Coup and the Pursuit of Gender Equality in Myanmar," UN Doc. A/HRC/56/CRP.8, 2 July 2024, https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc56crp8-courage-amid-crisis-gendered-impacts-coup-and-pursuit-gender.

countries. According to UN data, there are over 1.5 million refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar in Bangladesh, Malaysia, India, Thailand and Indonesia.[72]

217. Refugees often carry with them the trauma of war and violent attacks by the Myanmar military. Many have suffered injuries that lead to lifelong impairment, suggesting that the prevalence of disabilities among refugees is higher than among Myanmar's general population. However, there have been limited efforts to collect data on persons with disabilities among the refugee population, a gap that impedes humanitarian programming.

218. The conditions in refugee camps compounds the challenges faced by people with disabilities. Camps in both Bangladesh and Thailand are built on hilly terrain. Dirt paths are steep and turn to mud in the rainy season, becoming impassable for many with mobility impairments. Camps in both countries have been impacted by large-scale fires, threating the lives of those who cannot evacuate quickly or fail to receive warnings. Access to toilets, bathing facilities and clean water is a major challenge for persons with disabilities residing in refugee camps. The new facilities that were constructed by the Bangladesh government for Rohingya refugees on Bashan Char Island were not made accessible to persons with disabilities.

219. Despite the immense challenges they face, refugee camp residents with disabilities sometimes benefit from close proximity to international organizations and other service providers. While humanitarian agencies acknowledge the need to better ensure the accessibility and inclusivity of their programs—see "Support for persons with disabilities," below—they point to progress that is being made in reaching persons with disabilities with their services.[73] For example, multiple organizations work to provide assistive devices, including prosthetics, glasses and hearing aids, to persons with disabilities.

220. Still, these programs suffer from limited resources, and demand far exceeds supply. For example, persons requiring rehabilitation services often face long wait times or receive only one or two sessions when they require long term support. Health services are limited in refugee camps, and persons with disabilities often have trouble accessing the medicines they require.

221. There are education and vocational training programs in camps in both Bangladesh and Thailand. However, persons with disabilities often have trouble participating in these programs because of stigma, accessibility challenges, the lack of accessible curriculum, and transportation difficulties, among other challenges. Additionally, the impact of vocational training programs is blunted by official restrictions on income-generating activities.

XIII. Natural disasters and the 2025 earthquake

222. The 2013 *Natural Disaster Management Law* requires relevant government authorities to "give priority to" persons with disabilities in response to natural disasters.[74] However, in practice, Myanmar's policies concerning national disaster preparedness and response fail to address the specific requirements of persons with disabilities. In its 2019 concluding observations on Myanmar, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about the "lack of protocols, plans and measures with respect to persons with disabilities in these situations."[75] Of particular concern are the lack of warning and evacuation protocols for persons with disabilities. Many humanitarian organizations also lack adequate policies and preparation for natural disasters and other emergencies.

223. On 28 March 2025, a devastating 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar, causing widespread destruction and loss of life. According to official data, the earthquake killed more than 3,700 people and injured more than 5,100 in Myanmar. The true numbers

[72] UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Myanmar Situation, https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar (accessed 21 October 2025).
[73] See "Support for persons with disabilities," below.
[74] Natural Disaster Management Law, 2013, section 13.
[75] Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations, para. 21.

of those killed and injured are likely far higher. Many of those injured in the earthquake will experience lifelong disabilities. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the earthquake and the ensuing humanitarian crisis.

224. Over 200,000 people were displaced by the earthquake, with thousands sleeping on the streets, fearful of aftershocks and returning to damaged homes that could collapse. Extreme heat and drenching rains threatened the lives of quake survivors. Access to water, sanitation and electricity was severely disrupted. Over 300 hospitals or clinics were damaged or destroyed. Many people suffered from heat stroke and diarrhea. Cholera, malaria, dengue and other diseases threatened the lives of those in earthquake-impacted areas.

225. The junta's response to the earthquake further imperiled affected populations. On 2 April, the junta declared a unilateral ceasefire to facilitate relief efforts and subsequently extended the ceasefire multiple times. However, the ceasefire declaration appears to have been no more than an international public relations ploy, as the junta continued its offensive operations, including by carrying out airstrikes on civilian populations and infrastructure in quake-affected areas. Targets included hospitals and clinics. The junta also systematically obstructed earthquake relief efforts, including by restricting the delivery of humanitarian aid to opposition-controlled areas.

226. Persons with disabilities are struggling to survive in areas impacted by the earthquake.[76] Many assistive devices were destroyed in the earthquake. Schools and facilities of organizations providing rehabilitation and other services to persons with disabilities have been damaged or destroyed. Persons with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by disrupted access to food, shelter, electricity, clean drinking water, and sanitation facilities. Many struggle to travel the distances needed to access scarce resources or to adapt to makeshift living arrangements. Persons with disabilities in earthquake-impacted areas told the Special Rapporteur that they have skipped meals because of the scarcity of food.

227. A woman with a disability, who helped coordinate aid to earthquake impacted communities told the Special Rapporteur:

> After the earthquake, most people live in makeshift tents on the street. Most persons with disabilities can't live in the tent. They have health conditions and can't sleep in the tent. The other issue is the toilets. Other people can use public toilets that have been provided. But persons with disabilities can't use those toilets. Another issue is that after the earthquake, there was a [rain] storm. There are a lot of problems with diarrhea. There is a lot of suffering for the persons with disabilities. All of their assistive devices have been damaged or lost.

228. Persons with disabilities have faced greater challenges accessing humanitarian aid since the earthquake. A man with a physical disability who is coordinating relief efforts for persons with disabilities told the Special Rapporteur that the junta and junta-aligned militias were impeding aid into certain earthquake-impacted areas. He described having his phone searched and being turned around at checkpoints.

229. Although some humanitarian agencies have conducted post-earthquake assessments of the needs of persons with disabilities, relief efforts have generally failed to address their specific requirements or vulnerabilities.[77]

[76] UNFPA Myanmar and Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, "Situation Analysis Report: Impact of the Earthquake on Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in Mandalay and Sagaing Regions, Myanmar," 4 April 2025, http://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Report_Impact_of_the_Earthquake_on_OPDs_and_PWDs_in_Mandalay_and_Sagaing_UNFPA_04Apr2025.pdf.

[77] UNICEF, "Rapid Needs Assessment of Families with Disabilities in Post-Earthquake Myanmar," 5 April 2025, https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/media/11856/file/Rapid_Needs_Assessment_PostEarthquake_Disabilities_Myanmar.pdf.pdf.

230. A woman with a physical disability who helped deliver humanitarian aid to persons with disabilities impacted by the earthquake told the Special Rapporteur how the situation was particularly dire in rural areas:

> When we reached them, we found they were dehydrated. We took clean water and some sodium chloride packages. We didn't bring a lot, but these things were very useful because they are already dehydrated. When we arrived at the village … they didn't have any food. They were hungry. They think that it is meaningless to live. Even strong men with disabilities said they feel that their lives are meaningless without food. 'We have nothing to stay alive,' they said. When we heard them express those feelings, we lost confidence in how to provide counseling to them. … When we heard their stories, we also wanted to cry, but we realized it's not good to cry together. … The food shortage is faced by the whole village. There are some donors who provide food to the village, but it is a long queue and the persons with disabilities can't stay in the line a long time. So, they face more of an impact of the food shortage.

XIV. Supporting persons with disabilities

A. Organizations for persons with disabilities

231. In Myanmar, there are dozens of organizations providing support to persons with disabilities. Many are led and staffed by persons with disabilities. A man with a physical disability said, "I give the assistance to other disabled people. … That makes me feel proud to be a person with disabilities. My life is valuable."

232. A young man who lost his leg while serving in a People's Defense Force unit told the Special Rapporteur about his decision to start an organization that helps empower and support persons with disabilities:

> To encourage other people, you need to provide inspiration and a practical way for rehabilitation. That is why I established [my organization]. We give opportunities to the [disability] community. ... If I am able help 10 people. Then those 10 people can help 10 people. Then [assistance] will be spread to 100 people, and they can help others. … We can provide a community that collectively supports each other; people mutually helping each other.

233. Many service organizations face significant challenges meeting the growing need for services of persons with disabilities. This is exacerbated by the inaccessibility of many of their facilities and the very limited number of persons with disabilities who are employed by these organizations.

234. Some organizations provide food, medicine, hygiene products, cash assistance and other forms of support directly to persons with disabilities. Some help facilitate transportation for persons with disabilities to access health care or other services. Other organizations help to secure prosthetics or other assistive devices, including by connecting them with international organizations and other service providers. Organizations for persons with disabilities also facilitate vocational training and other education programs.

235. As described above, the lack of awareness concerning the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities is a major driver of stigma and discriminatory attitudes and actions. To help meet this challenge, some organizations facilitate awareness-raising activities and campaigns. Some noted that these initiatives have helped promote inclusion and combat discrimination in their communities.

236. The coup, armed conflict and the junta's crackdown on Myanmar civil society have upended the work of organizations for persons with disabilities. Many organizations have been forced to operate in exile and move their activities underground because of the threat of official obstruction, arrest or violence.

237. Organizational registration has become a source of vulnerability for many organizations. In 2022, the junta adopted the draconian *Organization Registration Law*, which mandates that all non-profit organizations and associations—local and international—register and provide extensive information on their members, activities and sources of funding. The law saddled registered organizations with extensive reporting requirements and gave junta officials expansive powers to investigate groups and seize their property. Establishing or working with an unregistered organization carries criminal penalties of up to five years' imprisonment.

238. Representatives of organizations for persons with disabilities described facing an impossible choice: register their organization and submit to junta oversight and control or choose not to register and run the risk of arrest and imprisonment. Some organizations have decided to suspend their operations because of the law and threats from the junta.

239. Prior to the coup, many organizations for persons with disabilities had engaged directly with officials in the civilian government to support the roll-out and implementation of the *Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law*. Organizations were also involved in other political activities, including helping persons with disabilities to register to vote and to reach polling stations on election day. After the coup, prior engagement with the civilian government became a risk factor, exposing them to the possibility of arrest or violence.

240. The founder of an organization for persons with disabilities, who herself has a physical disability, told the Special Rapporteur that, in the years prior to the coup she had served on a regional youth affairs committee that had engaged with the civilian government's Ministry of Immigration and Population. After the coup, she was forced into hiding. A disability rights leader, who has a disability himself, told the Special Rapporteur about how the space for public advocacy has been crushed since the coup: "Thank you for listening to us. It is very important. We don't have anywhere to raise our voices. Before the coup, we tried to raise our voices. But now we don't have anywhere to speak up. ... We are capable and our potential is not being used."

241. Not only government advocacy, but many other public-facing activities have become infeasible in the fraught security environment following the coup. Many organizations cancelled awareness-raising workshops, training programs and other such activities.

242. Since the coup, many organizations have prioritized addressing the immediate and dire needs of persons with disabilities who were displaced, conflict-affected or otherwise impacted by political upheaval and armed conflict. The founder of an organization for persons with disabilities described the change in her organization's priorities since the coup:

> The organization often supports people with disabilities who cannot afford transportation during the conflict. We find a donor and find a car to transport people out to safer areas. We provide cash for people in the conflict too. Some have fled to [areas with] colder climates, so we provide blankets, clothes and food. … There are some people who were hit by heavy weapons and lost some parts of their body, so we network with organizations to help with humanitarian assistance. … Other kinds of projects and assistance were suspended due to the conflict.

B. International support for persons with disabilities

243. International donors have been a major source of support for persons with disabilities and the organizations that serve them. In 2025, the UN targeted 722,000 persons with disabilities for support in the Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.[78]

244. However, many advocates for persons with disabilities have reported a "grim" funding climate since the coup. Some donors have reportedly shifted their priorities elsewhere, leaving significant budget shortfalls. The massive scale of humanitarian needs

[78] OCHA, "Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025," December 2024, https://myanmar.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/Myanmar%202025%20HNRP%20-%20English%20version.pdf.

following the coup may have led donors to prioritize interventions for the general population rather than disability-specific programming.

245. A man who works with a local organization for persons with disabilities described the diminished post-coup funding environment:

> From 2010 to 2020, there were a lot of NGOs and international organizations helping persons with disabilities or other government projects occurring in our area. … We provided education, health and job programs for persons with disabilities. … But after 2021, all of the support from the international organizations has been reduced, so we cannot provide as much as we did before.

246. Some donors have also required that grantees register under Myanmar law, forcing organizations to choose between forgoing available funding or accepting the risks and constraints that come with registering under the *Organization Registration Law*. Junta surveillance and banking restrictions have also made it difficult for some organizations to access funds from international donors. Many organizations for persons with disabilities have scaled down their programs or closed their doors because of budget problems.

247. The UN has developed a *Disability Inclusion Strategy* for its Myanmar humanitarian response. The strategy provides guidance on improving disability inclusion for humanitarian actors implementing both mainstream aid programs and targeted programs for persons with disabilities.[79] Since 2021, a Technical Advisory Group on Disability Inclusion comprised of local organizations of person with disabilities, international organizations and UN agencies has helped to improve accessibility and inclusivity of humanitarian programming.[80] Organizations for persons with disabilities are increasingly being consulted in the development of humanitarian programs, including the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.

248. Some donor governments have prioritized support for persons with disabilities in their foreign aid programs and humanitarian aid to Myanmar. Australia has made disability inclusion a "core theme" in its Myanmar funding, in line with its *International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy*.[81] As such, Australia requires that its partners disaggregate data based on disability and track progress on addressing barriers to inclusion. In a submission to the Special Rapporteur, Australia noted that most of its partners have struggled to meet targets related to disability inclusion but committed to supporting them on the design, implementation and monitoring of disability inclusion strategies.

249. Some organizations have demonstrated a willingness to integrate accessibility considerations into program design and assessment. These include agencies that have made efforts to ensure that information is available in accessible formats, including Braille, sign language, audio or video, and easy-to-read text.

250. Despite these initiatives, humanitarian programs as a whole appear to be falling short in terms of ensuring inclusion of and accessibility by persons with disabilities. In late 2024, the UN lamented that, "Inclusion of people with disabilities is not currently a major priority for humanitarian actors in Myanmar," a shortcoming that it attributed to a lack of capacity, data and resources.[82] It further noted that many projects only record 3 to 5 percent of beneficiaries being persons with disabilities, despite a target of 13 percent. Australia noted

[79] OCHA, "Disability inclusion strategy for the Humanitarian Response in Myanmar," 13 December 2024, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/myanmar/disability-inclusion-strategy-humanitarian-response-myanmar.

[80] The ICCG Small Group for Disability Inclusion was formed in 2021 and reorganized as the Technical Advisory Group in 2022.

[81] Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy, 2024, https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australias-international-disability-equity-and-rights-strategy.pdf.

[82] OCHA, "Disability inclusion strategy for the Humanitarian Response in Myanmar," 13 December 2024, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/myanmar/disability-inclusion-strategy-humanitarian-response-myanmar.

that persons with disabilities represented only three percent of those reached through food and cash assistance it supported.

251. Unlike Australia, many donors do not have policies or guidelines that specifically address the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and international humanitarian aid programs are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities. To the extent that policies promote accessibility, they usually focus on the needs of persons with physical disabilities and neglect psychosocial, visual, hearing or communication impairments.

252. Transportation barriers and the inaccessibility of facilities often prevent persons with disabilities from receiving assistance. For example, humanitarian organizations providing flood relief have often left supplies at local monasteries, many of which cannot be accessed by some people with mobility impairments. Persons with disabilities are sometimes concerned about their safety or fear they will face discrimination when accessing aid.

253. Persons with disabilities are under-represented in humanitarian organizations and coordination bodies, while aid workers themselves often lack awareness of the rights and requirements of persons with disabilities. Communication challenges impede many persons with disabilities' access to humanitarian aid. Few agencies provide information in accessible formats, resulting in many persons with disabilities being either unaware of the availability of humanitarian aid or unsure how to access such aid.

254. Persons with disabilities are too infrequently involved in the design of humanitarian relief efforts, contributing to their exclusion when these programs are implemented. Some persons with disabilities feel that, even when they are consulted, they are treated as an "afterthought" and their opinions do not shape the design of humanitarian programs.

XV. Recommendations

255. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that disability rights advocates, human rights defenders, Myanmar civil society organizations and other stakeholders launch a major initiative, with support from the international community, to address the greatest disabling condition of persons with disabilities in Myanmar: social stigma and the misperceptions, myths and beliefs that perpetuate it. Such an initiative could include:Rohingya stress that the same root causes of the violence suffered in 2017, remain unresolved. In the words of one member of the community, "*foremost among these is the restoration of our full-fledged citizenship in Myanmar with Rohingya recognized as one of the indigenous communities of the country with rights fully ensured, respected, and protected*". The community demands to be equal citizens and to have their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights respected, so they can thrive in Myanmar together with and alongside other communities.**

(a) The launch of a public, multi-faceted, coordinated campaign to generate awareness of the invisible crisis facing persons with disabilities, advance their human rights, and promote positive messaging on social media;

(b) The creation of an interfaith working group of prominent religious leaders and institutions to develop and promote greater understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities; and

(c) The organization of public events recognizing and celebrating persons with disabilities, including on the International Day of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

256. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that human rights advocates, including disability rights organizations and networks, seek the requisite public and private investments in human rights and humanitarian aid to address the hidden crisis facing persons with disabilities in Myanmar, the region and beyond. Governments that are willing to provide these investments must be recognized and actively supported.**

257. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that states, UN agencies, international humanitarian organizations and international donors:**

(a) Provide the National Unity Government, National Unity Consultative Council, ethnic resistance organizations, local governance structures and Myanmar civil society organizations with financial, technical and diplomatic support to promote the rights of persons with disabilities;

(b) Create an Accessibility Investment Fund to invest in equipment, technology, building modifications, communication devices and other goods and services to ensure the accessibility of infrastructure, transportation and information in Myanmar;

(c) Fund the creation of an Accessibility Working Group to provide public and private organizations and institutions with support to fully integrate persons with disabilities into their organizations, including through employment and services;

(d) Establish disability inclusion as a key guiding principle in humanitarian funding programs;

(e) Ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities throughout the programming cycle, including by engaging disability rights advocates and organizations of persons with disabilities in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects;

(f) Provide support for awareness-raising, education, healthcare, mental health, protection, legal assistance, vocational training, economic empowerment, data collection and other programs supporting persons with disabilities;

(g) Ensure a proportional response to humanitarian needs in Myanmar that prioritizes reaching displaced and vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, by prioritizing robust funding for local organizations of persons with disabilities, which are best placed to meet the needs of affected communities and possess the expertise, knowledge, trust, and networks to provide effective assistance;

(h) Require that funds be allocated to disability-specific budget lines in grants for development, humanitarian and governance programs in Myanmar;

(i) Require that implementing partners and grantees develop disability inclusion frameworks that include clear targets and strategies for reaching persons with disabilities;

(j) Enable the delivery of cross-border aid to internally displaced persons, while avoiding legitimizing the SAC to the greatest extent possible;

(k) Ensure that humanitarian aid and services are fully accessible by persons with disabilities, including by using accessible facilities and adapting delivery methods;

(l) Ensure the accessibility of all communications related to humanitarian aid and services, including by increasing the use of sign language, Braille, easy-to-read text and assistive communication devices;

(m) Provide technical support and resources to implementing partners to increase their knowledge of and capacity to implement inclusive programming;

(n) Integrate landmine and unexploded ordnance risk education, including instruction appropriate for children, into humanitarian aid delivery programs, ensuring that populations in areas newly affected by conflict are informed of the risks posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance;

(o) Work to reform donor compliance and reporting policies in light of current conditions in Myanmar, including by:

i. Enabling funding and other support to unregistered organizations;

ii. Adopting flexible procurement and reporting requirements, including by reducing requirements to retain documentation that could increase the vulnerability of funding recipients and partners; and

iii. Allowing the transfer of funds outside Myanmar's formal banking system;

(p) Ensure the accessible design of all infrastructure in refugee camps in Bangladesh, Thailand and elsewhere; and

(q) Fully fund the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan.

258. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that States support efforts to hold perpetrators of atrocity crimes, including crimes against persons with disabilities, accountable in impartial and independent courts, including the International Criminal Court and national courts in countries with universal jurisdiction laws.**

259. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that the National Unity Government, the National Unity Consultative Council, ethnic resistance organizations, and regional, state and local governance bodies:**

(a) Establish a Joint Coordinating Committee on disabilities or other advisory body to coordinate and provide expert advice on policies concerning persons with disabilities;

(b) Ensure persons with disabilities of all ethnic groups, including Rohingya, are included and empowered in all levels of decision-making and political discussions related to the resolution of the present crisis and Myanmar's future;

(c) Enshrine the rights of persons with disabilities in policies, laws and transitional processes that will shape the future of Myanmar, including a new constitution for a federal, democratic Myanmar, which should explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and affirmatively guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities, including the rights to education, health and reasonable accommodation at work; and

(d) Prohibit the use of anti-personnel landmines.

260. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that a future democratic government of Myanmar:**

(a) Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);

(b) Ratify key international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(c) Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

(d) Develop a national disability strategy or action plan to ensure the full implementation of the CRPD;

(e) Fully incorporate the CRPD into Myanmar's legal framework, including by aligning the concept of disability with the human rights model of disability set out in the Convention;

(f) Adopt and implement a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy that protects against discrimination on the basis of disability;

(g) Adopt comprehensive laws, policies and plans to protect persons with disabilities affected by natural disasters and other emergencies;

(h) Rigorously enforce legal provisions protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, including provisions in the *Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, National Building Code*, *Social Security Law*, *Natural Disaster Management Law* and *Labour Law*;

(i) Ensure that the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is provided the resources necessary to fulfil its mandate;

(j) Establish formal mechanisms to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in political and governance processes;

(k) Establish accessible and effective mechanisms ensuring access to justice for persons with disabilities, including those who have experienced discrimination and violence;

(l) Increase the use of sign language, Braille, easy-to-read text and assistive communication devices in public communications and all government processes and mechanisms, including legal and justice processes and mechanisms;

(m) Train government officers in all sectors, including medical care providers, security forces and judicial and law enforcement officials, on the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities;

(n) Ensure the accessibility of polling stations and election materials;

(o) Ensure that persons with disabilities can access and use assistive devices and technology, including by providing budgetary resources to ensure such devices are affordable or free of charge;

(p) Ensure inclusive education, including by:

i. Promoting the enrollment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools;

ii. Training teachers on instruction of children with disabilities;

iii. Developing curricula and educational materials that are accessible to persons with disabilities; and

iv. Increasing the availability of interpreters and assistive devices in classrooms;

(q) Ensure the collection of robust data concerning persons with disabilities in line with international standards, including in Myanmar's next census; and

(r) Address the multiple and intersectional discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities as well as persons with disabilities who belong to ethnic or religious minorities.

261. **The Special Rapporteur calls on the junta to:**

(a) Dissolve itself, release all political prisoners, including those with disabilities, allow a legitimate government reflecting the will of the people to be formed, and cooperate with international accountability mechanisms;

(b) Give clear and unequivocal orders to security forces to stop their attacks on civilians, end all forms of torture and ill-treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence, and refrain from other human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law; and

(c) Stop blocking the delivery of food, medicines, humanitarian aid and other goods, including equipment and supplies for persons with disabilities, to displaced and conflict-affected populations in Myanmar.