

Trump's Aid Cuts Have 'Strengthened Tyranny' in Myanmar, Human Rights Groups Warn

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President Trump's sweeping cuts to foreign aid have emboldened military generals in Myanmar to carry out mass killings with impunity, according to human rights groups working in the country. The Trump Administration's decision to close USAID was announced earlier this year under the so-called Department of Government Efficiency (Doge), with Myanmar set to lose over \$1 billion of development assistance by 2029.

Organisations on the ground – including pro-democracy groups, civil society networks, independent media outlets and humanitarian aid providers – have been forced to cease operations, lay off staff and reduce essential services.

Sam Mason, CEO of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART):

"Some of our worst fears are now being realised. We warned at the time [when aid cuts were announced] that such a rushed and ill-conceived policy would weaken local mechanisms for oversight and justice, that civilians would become even more exposed to threats and persecution. Now, in some of the country's most volatile regions, the military have carte blanche to violate human rights."

Benedict Rogers, Senior Director at Fortify Rights:

"The ripple effects of these cuts are far-reaching, putting thousands of lives in grave danger and severely impeding the ability for pro-democracy and human rights groups to make their voices heard. The cuts undermine years of international efforts to support a democratic future for Myanmar and strike a devastating blow to the country's courageous but embattled democracy movement. They undermine efforts to seek accountability for mass atrocity crimes, undercut the efforts of brave local journalists to report the truth about the situation in the country, and represent a gift to the junta's authoritarian allies China and Russia."

Lord Alton of Liverpool, who chairs the Joint Committee on Human Rights and speaks here in a personal capacity:

"The more we remove deterrents to violence, the more we embolden the perpetrators. We give them a green light to carry on their killings with impunity. It strengthens tyranny and intensifies suffering."

Frontline human rights group, who remain anonymous for security reasons:

"Trump's policy is killing people. Aid cuts will have an even deadlier impact than the earthquake."

Joint News Release

A local human rights group:

“We are worried for our future. We are among many NGOs [non-governmental organisations]

Sisters-2-Sisters:

“Aid cuts badly impact ordinary citizens. Patients who depend on treatment cannot access the medicines they need.”

Similar concerns are highlighted in a report by HART, published today, from Shan State and the Thai-Myanmar border.

The report warns that aid cuts have “de-funded health clinics, women’s shelters, child protection services, essential medicines, vaccinations, access to legal aid, emergency food distribution [and] independent monitoring of human rights violations.”

Benedict Rogers adds:

“I just returned from a month in the region, where I heard first-hand how refugees’ rations have been stopped, leaving them in a precarious struggle for survival. Food, schooling for children, and basic medical care provision has almost ceased. Unless the international community steps up, and works in partnership with the Thai authorities to find a long-term sustainable solution for the livelihoods of refugees, these cuts could result in destitution, disease and death. At a time when Myanmar’s military regime is committing egregious atrocity crimes, now is not the moment to cut the lifelines of support to the people.”

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Notes to editors:

- The military coup in 2021 plunged Myanmar (Burma) into a deep humanitarian crisis.
- An estimated 3.5 million people are internally displaced.
- Civilians suffer frequent attacks, including torched homes, arbitrary arrests and sexual violence.
- A powerful earthquake struck in March 2025, with tremors felt in Thailand, China and India.