



Geneva and Brussels, 5 February 2025

## **The military regime in Myanmar creates a parallel trade union confederation and attacks legitimate trade union**

Dear,

We are writing this letter to you on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](#) and [industriAll European Trade Union](#), both representing workers in mining, energy, and manufacturing industries throughout the world, to inform the EU of a worrisome and unacceptable development, which is the creation of a parallel and illegitimate union structure by the military regime in Myanmar.

We have just been informed by the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM) that the State Administration Council (SAC) has facilitated the establishment of a parallel trade union confederation, the Myanmar Labour Confederation (MLC), which is misleadingly named identically to CTUM in Burmese but distinct in English. This work started in 2023 when the SAC Deputy Minister called a meeting of workers in the Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone and instructed workers to substitute the Central Committee members of the CTUM.

The creation of the Myanmar Labour Confederation (MLC) appears to be a deliberate strategy to dismantle and replace independent trade unions, particularly CTUM and its affiliate, the Industrial Workers' Federation of Myanmar (IWFEM). CTUM has obtained evidence of the MLC's active collaboration with the SAC's Ministry of Labour (MOL) in multiple meetings throughout January 2025, as well as documented instances of the MLC misrepresenting itself as CTUM to workers, employers, and international stakeholders.

Notably, the MLC organized an event on 22 January 2025, under the pretext of a union education workshop, which was in reality an IWFEM "congress" to install pro-SAC leadership in IWFEM. This event was conducted under heavy surveillance by the police and special branch officers, who were visibly present and played an active role in controlling the meeting. Their presence was not merely for observation but served as an instrument of intimidation and coercion, reinforcing the SAC's direct involvement in suppressing independent trade unions. A genuine trade union meeting would not require such a security presence, yet this event was carefully orchestrated with the SAC's Ministry of Labour (MOL), effectively stripping workers of their right to freely associate and organize without fear of state intervention. Former members of the CTUM and IWFEM, who had resigned or been disassociated before the military coup, colluded with the SAC to spearhead these efforts, providing a façade of legitimacy to the regime's attack on trade union independence.

This state-backed attack on trade union representation does not merely reflect non-compliance with the COI's recommendations – it constitutes an active effort to dismantle the

legitimate trade union movement while installing a regime's-controlled entity in its place. Instead of working towards the COI's clear directives, the SAC has intensified its crackdown on independent trade unions, seeking to eliminate the very organizations that the COI recognized as victims of state persecution. The Commission of Inquiry (COI)'s report (paragraph 173) explicitly acknowledged that:

"As a result of targeted attacks against the trade union movement, military intervention in union activities, and workplace intimidation, proper trade unions have been unable to function and engage in legitimate union activities without serious concerns for the safety and security of their members and leaders."

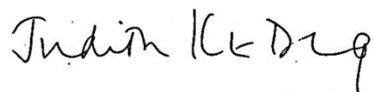
Furthermore, paragraph 174 of the COI's report confirmed that the military's interference in trade union affairs—including its establishment, functioning, and activities—was a central focus of its fact-finding mission. The recent developments only further validate these concerns and demonstrate that the SAC has completely disregarded the findings and recommendations of the COI report.

Particularly alarming is paragraph 437 of the COI report, which documented the SAC-controlled Ministry of Labour's public statements in military-controlled media. The Ministry of Labour falsely claimed that while CTUM's activities were currently limited, it still existed as a labour organization and that its executive committee therefore needed to be re-elected—clearly legitimizing state interference in union affairs. In response, CTUM strongly rejected these claims in a statement issued on 16 March 2023, condemning them as a blatant violation of trade union independence and an attempt to fracture the movement.

What has now transpired is a direct continuation of the SAC's systematic strategy to erode independent trade unions. This goes beyond a failure to comply with the COI's recommendations: it is an outright attempt to suppress trade unionism in Myanmar and dismantle its foundations under the guise of state-sanctioned control. These actions, which contravene the fundamental principles of Freedom of Association (Convention No. 87) and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (Convention No. 98), further underscore the urgent need for robust measures to ensure compliance with the Commission of Inquiry (COI)'s recommendations.

IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union call on the EU to condemn this attack on trade unions and take immediate measures to hold the SAC accountable for its violation of the fundamental right of workers to freedom of association in Myanmar.

Sincerely yours,



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IndustriALL European Trade Union



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General Secretary  
IndustriALL Global Trade Union