

Counter-Terrorism Measures in Myanmar

Preventing and Combating Terrorism

1. Myanmar is a party to (13) out of (19) Universal Counter-Terrorism legal instruments. Myanmar became a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes on 30th March 2004. In regional context, Myanmar is also a signatory to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Convention on Counter-Terrorism.
2. In accordance with international obligations under the legal instruments including relevant United Nations resolutions, Myanmar enacted Counter-Terrorism Law on 4 June 2014. The instrument includes 19 Chapters with 72 articles. In pursuant to the Chapter 3 of the Law, the government has formed the Central Committee for Counter Terrorism comprising 20 representatives from the relevant ministries with the Union Minister for Home Affairs as Chairman. Counter-Terrorism Department has been established under Myanmar Police Force since 2015. The Government of Myanmar has also promulgated Anti-Money Laundering Law and set up a Financial Investigation Unit to deter and prevent financing to terrorism.
3. The Financial Investigation Unit and Counter-Terrorism Department have been working closely with the Financial Actions Task Force in eradicating money-laundering in order to deter financing to terrorists. Moreover, Myanmar Counter-Terrorism agencies are working closely with ASEAN-pol, UNODC and International counterparts to fight terrorism both at regional and international levels. Special Branch of Myanmar Police Force- MPF is a member organization of ASEAN intelligence Community- Counter-terrorism Committee (AIC CTC). Moreover, Myanmar has been participating in the Counter Terrorism information sharing with AIC Dialogue Partners; namely US, Australia, India, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.
4. The Government of Myanmar is actively cooperating with ASEAN member states to combat terrorism and transnational crimes. Myanmar is regularly participating at the ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on Transnational Crimes-AMMTC and Senior Official Meetings on Transnational Organized Crimes-SOMTC. Myanmar hosted the 12th AMMTC from 29th October to 2nd November 2018 and the 19th SOMTC from 22 to 26 July 2019 respectively in Nay Pyi Taw. Special ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on the Rule of Radicalization and Violent Extremism have been held with the aim to exchange experiences, best practices, and views on countering terrorism among ASEAN member States. Myanmar hosted 3rd Special ASEAN Ministerial Meetings on the Rule of Radicalization and Violent Extremism during 12th AMMTC.



5. The Mobile/Fixed Interpol Network Database is being used at international airports and border check points in Myanmar. Likewise, Advanced Passenger Processing System (APPS) is installed in Yangon International Airport to monitor the travels of terrorists including FTFs. Myanmar Border Police joined the UNODC Border Liaison Office Network in 2013 and is working closely with its counterparts in sharing information and is participating in joint activities to combat cross border terrorism, transnational organized crimes and illegal smugglings.

6. The Government of Myanmar has signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Security Dialogue and Cooperation as well as the Memorandum of Understanding on Establishment of Border Liaison Office with Bangladesh on 24 October 2017. The two MoUs aim to strengthen bilateral cooperation, especially in sharing information in dealing with the security threats evolved from transnational terrorism including the flow of FTFs through land border. The Government of Myanmar has taken initiative to conduct regular coordinated border patrolling by its border security forces with Bangladesh Border Police since early 2018.

7. Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist group a.k.a Harakah-al-Yaqin launched premeditated and coordinated armed attacks against multiple Myanmar security posts in Northern Rakhine State in October 2016 and August 2017. The ARSA terrorists had killed many security personnel and hundreds of innocent civilians, including ethnic minorities and pro-government Muslims. The terrorist atrocities made thousands of innocent ethnic population fled their villages to other parts of Rakhine State. The terrorist attacks eventually resulted in the present humanitarian crisis and subsequent counter terrorist operations.

8. The Government of Myanmar is seriously concerned on the clear and present threats of ARSA terrorist based on two reasons. First, ARSA has never established a single permanent base inside Myanmar since its inceptions. ARSA radicalizes local Muslims and gave them warfare training from abroad. The group usually initiates and organizes terrorist attacks through internet communication such as WhatsApp audio message.

9. The second concern is the link between ARSA and international terrorist groups, including FTFs. Since its inception, ARSA has been reportedly guided and supported by foreign terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and other regional groups. Recently, some Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) had tried to enter Myanmar territory from one of its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, in an attempt to reinforce ARSA terrorist activities.

10. The arrest of ARSA terrorist suspects linking with ISIL by Malaysian authorities in May and July 2019 were indisputable evidence of their connection with international terrorist



groups. In addition, the German news agency DW has revealed on 24 September 2019 that over three thousand five hundred ARSA terrorist individuals are sheltering in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. They threatened aid workers and even killed people who expressed their desire to return to Rakhine State.

11. Rakhine issue has been exploited by extremists for their own political and religious agenda. Al-Qaida, Daesh and other regional and international terrorist groups had called for jihad against Myanmar before and after the ARSA terrorist attacks of October 2016 and August 2017. There had also been efforts by Daesh sympathizers to spread the extremist ideology among the refugees in IDP camps.

Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE)

12. The Government of Myanmar has given special attention not only to the fight against terrorism but also to the prevention of mainstreaming of violent extremism through the promotion of tolerance interfaith and intercultural dialogue. In order to promote interfaith harmony, a total of 130 interfaith groups have already been established nationwide.

13. Religions for Peace-RfP (Myanmar) was established in September 2012 to build peace and harmony within the societies across the country. Since 2018, training programmes have been conducted by RfP (Myanmar) to promote interfaith harmony and the role of women and youths. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture in cooperation with RfP (Myanmar), successfully held Third Religious for Peace Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace in Myanmar on 14-15- November 2019. A Myanmar delegation composed of RfP members had participated at the 10th World Assembly of Religious for Peace held in Linda, Germany on 23rd August 2019.

14. The 5th Forum for Religious for Peace and Asia Interfaith Youth Network was also held in Yangon from 18 to 20 December 2018. Furthermore, the Government of Myanmar is organizing training and workshops to promote responsible media and digital literacy to address the issue of hate speech. It has also discussed with Facebook to advocate proper use of social media. The government has also been raising awareness of norms and ethics of social media through newspapers, television and radios since June 2018.

Ensuring Human Rights

15. The Competent authorities have been developing a domestic work plan to guarantee human rights in criminal cases related to terrorism. In the meantime, law enforcement agencies



have been following strictly the existing rules and regulations while safeguarding and rescuing the public after the terrorist attacks/ terrorism related crimes. In addition, legal provisions are prescribed in Myanmar Counter-Terrorism Law to ensure that the investigations and prosecution processes are conducted in accordance with international human rights law and other relevant obligations to safeguard the basic rights and benefits including equality and non-discrimination.

16. According to the Counter Terrorism Law, counter terrorist measures in Myanmar are guided by the following legal principles,

- Responses to terrorist attacks must ensure basic legal rights of all the people involved in terrorist incidents,
- Protection and rescue measures during and after the terrorist incidents must be in line with the existing rules and regulations,
- Investigation and legal action against perpetrators must be in compliance with the international human rights law and, fully guarantee the legal rights of entitlement.

