The Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge (MyPACK) Hub

REPORT

# REORIENTING

## CANADA'S STRATEGY ON MYANMAR

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE III OF CANADA'S MYANMAR STRATEGY

NOVEMBER 2024

The Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge (MyPACK) Hub is an IDRC-funded Research Hub housed by the Asian Institute at the University of Toronto, Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

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# Executive Summary

**Canada Needs to Revise its Strategy on Myanmar and the Rohingya.** In 2018, Prime Minister Trudeau's Special Envoy to Myanmar Bob Rae released a report detailing the humanitarian situation in Myanmar and Bangladesh for the Rohingya people.[1] In it, he outlined 17 recommendations Canada could follow to take leadership in providing assistance to the Rohingya people, provide relief for the humanitarian disaster, and strengthen accountability between humanitarian agencies, local and international governments, and communities. What followed were two strategies over 7 years that allocated approximately $600 million in aid.[2,3] The latest strategy will end in 2024. The 2018 report brought the issue onto the international stage and made Canada a leader in various aspects of the international response. Since then, however, the situation has changed so drastically that a newly revised strategy for Myanmar is needed.[4]

This report aims to provide Canadian policymakers in **Global Affairs Canada**, the **Prime Minister's Office**, the **Minister of Foreign Affairs' Office**, the **Minister of International Development's Office**, the **Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's Office**, and the **Parliament of Canada** with a foundation for re-orienting Canada's position on the situation in Myanmar. We provide an analysis of the situation in Myanmar and a summary of current key players in a rapidly changing political moment. We end this report with a set of new recommendations that can guide Canadian strategy and leadership in supporting Myanmar's pro-democracy and humanitarian actors. These recommendations note areas of success in Canada's engagement, as well as crucial areas where support needs to be re-focused or expanded.

## What is the MyPACK Hub?

The Myanmar Policy and Community Knowledge (MyPACK) Hub is a research group based out of the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. It was formed in 2023 with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and is led by Prof. Matthew J Walton, an expert in Myanmar's politics. MyPACK's team consists of Myanmar students, researchers, community leaders, and political figures with decades of experience working on Myanmar issues. The MyPACK Hub is a space for generating informed and timely research and policy reports for decision-makers in Canada and abroad on Myanmar-related issues and topics.

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Below we make the following 16 recommendations, under 4 thematic section headings:

| Section | Recommendation |
|---|---|
| **Adapting to Myanmar's post-coup environment** | 1: Officially recognize the National Unity Government |
| | 2: Ensure Canadian aid does not go to the Myanmar military or its affiliates |
| | 3: Appoint a new Special Envoy for Myanmar |
| | 4: Provide aid and expertise to grassroots and democratic initiatives in liberated areas |
| **Rebalancing Canada's humanitarian and development aid practices, to work through and empower, and coordinate with local organizations and networks** | 5: Prioritize routing humanitarian aid through local organizations and networks |
| | 6: Expand pathways for non-lethal aid to opposition stakeholder groups |
| | 7: Support feminist organizing in Myanmar's struggle |
| | 8: Empower and support young people engaged in pro-democracy and humanitarian work |
| | 9: Build networks with Canadian educational institutions for scholarships and development |
| | 10: Engage with and support Myanmar diaspora groups in Canada |
| **Continuing Canada's robust humanitarian support for the Rohingya, while expanding to emphasize Rohingya's political voice and place as a part of Myanmar** | 11: Continue strong humanitarian support for Rohingya in refugee camps |
| | 12: Support grassroots efforts for a political voice for Rohingya in Myanmar |
| | 13: Closely monitor inter-communal dynamics in Rakhine State |
| | 14: Commit to accepting more refugees from Myanmar, including Rohingya |
| **Working through bilateral diplomatic relationships and multilateral initiatives to better support the people of Myanmar** | 15: Leverage diplomatic relationships to encourage regional actors to support Myanmar |
| | 16: Expand support for international documentation and legal accountability efforts |

# Introduction

## The Situation in Myanmar

More than three years have passed since the February 2021 coup in Myanmar. The Myanmar military made unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud[5] after its proxy political party lost the 2020 election in a landslide to the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) and subsequently seized power and arrested opposition leaders.[6] This prompted hundreds of thousands of people to join a wide-reaching Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) that continues today. The military's violent response to protests sparked nationwide unrest and violence. Over 50,000 people have died,[7] pushing Myanmar to become the second most violent country in the world in 2024.[8]

Tens of thousands of young people throughout the country joined People's Defense Forces (PDFs)[9] and began to fight alongside Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) that themselves have been engaging in ongoing conflict with the Myanmar military junta, also known as the State Administration Council (SAC). Opposition political actors that escaped arrest formed a parallel parliament, known as the Committee Representing the Pyithu Hluttaw (CRPH), and a government known as the National Unity Government (NUG).[10] Myanmar's NUG, PDFs, and EROs have collectively triumphed in borderlands, ethnic states, and rural areas, leaving the junta without effective control over 86% of the territory and 67% of the national population.[11] The military has faced defections of over 3,000 soldiers and 9,000 police[12] and losses of over 21,000 of its approximately 150,000 personnel.[13]

The humanitarian crisis in Myanmar is dire. UNICEF estimates that over 3 million people have been internally displaced since the coup, and millions more within the country are in need of humanitarian assistance.[14] Over 1.3 million people have fled to neighbouring Thailand, India, and Bangladesh since the onset of the coup. 1 million Rohingya remain stuck outside Myanmar in camps in Bangladesh, and over 600,000 remain stateless inside Myanmar. Rohingya in the camps have limited opportunities for education or livelihoods and are facing violence and coercion from armed actors. Rohingya in Myanmar are increasingly squeezed between the Myanmar military–that is forcibly recruiting some to join its ranks–and the Arakan Army–which is violently displacing some Rohingya communities and complicating the possibility of safe and dignified return.

## Who are the Actors?

The political and power landscape in Myanmar is complex. The military junta, known as the **State Administration Council (SAC),** controls the country's military out of the capital, Nay Pyi Taw, with its

Commander-in-Chief and self-proclaimed President General Min Aung Hlaing at the top. The SAC is nominally propped up by **Russia**[15] and **China**. However, there is growing discontent among Chinese authorities with the SAC's handling of the situation.[16]

On the other side is the main opposition: the **National Unity Government (NUG)** composed of an executive formed by the **Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)**, a collection of elected MPs that escaped arrest in 2021. The NUG is composed of many elected officials from the NLD but distinguished itself from the party by making much clearer statements about crimes committed against the Rohingya and more explicit commitments to a federal democratic system. It also established the **People's Defence Forces (PDFs)** as its armed wings, although some PDFs operate independently. PDFs also operate throughout the country in coordination with various **Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs)**. The NUG is most closely aligned with the **K3C EROs**: the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and the Chin National Front (CNF).[17] The **United States** has already publicly engaged with the K3C[18] and has committed funding to the NUG through the BURMA Act and the National Defense Authorization Act in 2023.[19]

The junta was never able to consolidate control beyond the major cities, gradually weakening in terms of territory, resources, and morale due to persistent ERO and PDF attacks across the country. This situation escalated with the launch of **Operation 1027**, led by the **Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA)**[20] alongside some PDF forces,[21] resulting in significant territorial losses for the junta in Northern Shan State. The 3BHA—comprising the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Arakan Army (AA)—was pressured by China, with which they have close ties, not to ally with the PDFs or the NUG.[22] However, Operation 1027 and recent victories have seen NUG-affiliated PDFs playing an increasingly visible role in the fight.[23] Despite China's efforts to broker a short-lived ceasefire,[24] the alliance's growing collaboration with the PDFs has become pivotal in capturing territories and weakening the SAC.

**Civil society organizations (CSOs)** in Myanmar are major actors in aid and social service delivery.[25] Often working in partnership with or alongside EROs, INGOs, and aid agencies, these groups are largely responsible for health and education across the country, especially in ethnic regions. They operate their own nonprofit organizations and work in tandem with local and non-state government actors.

# Recommendations

We established 16 distinct recommendations for the Canadian government to take on in their ongoing engagement with issues in Myanmar. The 16 recommendations are divided into four thematic sections:

1. **Adapting to Myanmar's post-coup environment.**
2. **Rebalancing Canada's humanitarian and development aid practices** to work through, empower and coordinate with local organizations and networks.
3. **Continuing Canada's robust humanitarian support for the Rohingya** while expanding to emphasize Rohingya's political voice and place as a part of Myanmar.
4. **Working through bilateral diplomatic relationships and multilateral initiatives** to better support the people of Myanmar.

## Theme 1: Adapting to Myanmar's post-coup environment

### Recommendation 1: Officially recognize the National Unity Government

The Canadian government should officially recognize the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar as the legitimate representative of the Burmese people and encourage allies to collectively make a similar recognition. Recognition would affirm Canada's commitment to democracy by acknowledging the democratic mandate of the 2020 general election in Myanmar, where the National League for Democracy (NLD) won a decisive super-majority, and honouring the popular will as expressed through widespread demonstrations and the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) that followed the coup. Recognizing the NUG would reinforce the legitimacy of this electoral outcome and stand as a clear rejection of the military's attempts to undermine the will of the Burmese people.

Furthermore, the NUG has effectively built parallel governance structures across many areas of Myanmar and has engaged in consultations with Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) and diverse stakeholders, including Rohingya. This approach not only reflects the NUG's legitimacy but also demonstrates a pragmatic effort to govern inclusively and address the country's complex dynamics.

Canada has already been engaging with representatives of the NUG in increasingly formal ways, but recognition could immediately open up additional pathways for aid delivery to address the pressing humanitarian crisis. While official recognition would likely invite retaliation from the military regime, its potential effects on hastening a peaceful and equitable resolution to the conflict in Myanmar must be considered. It is also not without precedent: the European Parliament[26] has

similarly recognized the NUG, and countries such as East Timor[27] and the Czech Republic[28] have formally welcomed NUG representatives to official events.

**Recommendation 2: Continue to ensure that Canadian aid does not go to the Myanmar military, the SAC, or its affiliated businesses and organisations**

After the 2021 military coup, Canada sanctioned dozens of individuals and businesses associated with the Myanmar military.[29] Global Affairs Canada has stated a commitment to target humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable, to support peaceful democratic rule, and to put pressure on human rights violators through accountability measures. That humanitarian aid must be flexibly and thoughtfully deployed in order to avoid strengthening the SAC and giving military leaders and their allies opportunities to profit. Relevant Canadian ministries and other government entities should conduct reviews to consider new sanctions, ensure that existing sanctions are appropriately targeted and effectively enforced, and make certain that funds do not go to military institutions.

**Recommendation 3: Appoint a new Special Envoy for Myanmar**

The situation in Myanmar is changing rapidly, and a Special Envoy can help sharpen the focus and responsiveness of Canadian aid while also providing up-to-date analysis to Canadian decision-makers. Additionally, a new Special Envoy will be an effective representative of the Canadian government in deepening and expanding relationships with the many actors aligned against Myanmar's military government. Bob Rae's 2018 report called for the government to establish a "Rohingya Working Group… to be chaired by a senior deputy minister, to ensure a 'whole of government' response".[30] Canada has not enacted this recommendation and has not updated its Myanmar policy since the end of Mr Rae's term as Special Envoy. Given the significant changes Myanmar has undergone after the coup, Canada needs to update its strategy so its engagement with Myanmar can more effectively support a democratic transition.

**Recommendation 4: Provide Canadian aid and expertise—where appropriate—in support of emergent grassroots, subnational and national democratic initiatives and coalitions, and in support of local administration and public service provision in liberated areas**

Myanmar has a long tradition of people governing outside the military regime, in local governance structures, and in exile outside the country. For decades, people have been anticipating and building expertise on ways forward after a military dictatorship. Currently, democratic processes are emerging–however imperfectly–across the country in the form of grassroots, national democracy building and coalitions.[31] Canada should support these efforts through both funding and

training, responding to requests for assistance that include political mentorship, meeting facilitation, conflict resolution skills-building, political capacity, and political leadership. Canada must recognize that longstanding civil society organizations (CSOs) have expertise in governance, and their work must be further supported and amplified.

Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) groups have shifted their initial stance of resistance to the coup regime to providing alternative governance institutions (for example, in education and health care) outside the influence of the military. We need to see aid to these groups—and to similar institutions established by EROs—as not only providing essential public service delivery to populations that have rejected military rule; these groups are the foundation of future public institutions and public administration in Myanmar.

The NUG currently estimates that 60% of Myanmar is no longer controlled by the military dictatorship.[32] The Special Advisory Council for Myanmar stated in their 2024 report that 67% of the population are not under "stable junta control".[33] These regions must now be considered "semi-autonomous": they are simultaneously run by local groups and governance while also accountable to communities and groups across Myanmar, which are coordinating the revolutionary battles against the military and toward a future of democratic federalism. Canada's support for these existing practices and collaborations will fulfill its commitment to peace and security across Myanmar.

## Theme 2: Rebalancing Canada's humanitarian and development aid practices, to empower and coordinate with local organizations and networks

**Recommendation 5: Prioritize routing Canadian humanitarian aid to Myanmar through local organizations and networks**

Numerous studies show that local organizations' unique understanding of, access to, and trust within communities has put them at the forefront of humanitarian efforts; they are more effective and efficient at aid delivery than large INGOs. They also serve as productive partners for international organizations, facilitating engagement with local actors and networks.[34] Supporting local organizations and networks thus builds long-term governance capacity. Studies show that compliance standards policies burden local stakeholders,[35] and experts recommend that INGOs collaborate with local stakeholders to design compliance systems that enhance local institutions rather than place further burdens on them.[36] Global Affairs Canada has commissioned research that has explored the importance and challenges of "localizing"

aid.[37] Canada should direct more Myanmar aid funding to local, on-the-ground organizations and drop complex compliance requirements for these groups, so they may focus their efforts on aid delivery.

**Recommendation 6: Expand the pathways to providing more non-lethal aid directly to stakeholder groups in Myanmar's opposition**

In addition to the NUG, many Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs) have developed and nurtured their own governance and public service systems for decades. After the coup, a wider range of actors formed local networks to deliver humanitarian aid where gaps exist, including civil society groups, small local NGOs, and civil disobedience groups. Working in tandem, they provide humanitarian services while working against the military: this collaboration represents Myanmar's greatest chance at a federal democratic future.[38]

Given the unprecedented nature of Myanmar's revolutionary situation, it is unsurprising that many groups providing essential governance, public services and humanitarian aid also have close links to armed groups fighting against the military and its allies. While recognizing the challenges that these circumstances present, Canadian agencies should explore more ways to provide expanded non-lethal aid directly to these essential groups while maintaining compliance with relevant laws and guidelines.

**Recommendation 7: Recognize and support the feminist organizing that has played a key role in Myanmar's struggle.**

Women in and from Myanmar have played a critical/essential role in civil society organizing even before the military coup. Myanmar's women activists have always been involved in important peace and security activities, including, but not limited to, peace negotiations, relief and recovery aid management, reconciliation, and transitional justice. Following the coup, feminist activism has expanded to cover an unprecedented range of anti-authoritarian activities, ranging from raising awareness of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) to taking up arms to fight against the Burmese military regime, as seen in the case of Myaung Women Warriors (M2W).

Civil society organizations led by women not only organize and mobilize against military dictatorship but also play a critical role in ensuring that women's voices are heard and their concerns addressed even amidst war and political violence. As recognized in the Security Council Resolution 1325, the first United Nations resolution on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), armed conflict has unique and disproportionate effects on women and girls.[39] Many women-led organizations in Myanmar have spoken out publicly against the junta's extreme violence against women and girls. As a country with an official Feminist International As-

sistance Policy, Canada must play an active role in amplifying Myanmar women's voices and providing necessary financial and capacity-building support to feminist organizations led by women.

**Recommendation 8: Empower, train, and support young people engaged in pro-democracy and humanitarian work**

Recognize the significant impact Myanmar's younger generations, specifically "Generation Z", have made throughout the country's ongoing political developments.[40] Young people are lauded for their collective efforts in building a large activist movement,[41] being on the frontlines of armed conflict,[42] and promoting social change towards pro-democratic and multicultural values.[43] However, actively involved young people are more likely to be under-resourced, risking their long-term development due to the cancellation of education and employment development while also jeopardizing their ability to safely return to Myanmar society. Young people from a variety of backgrounds engaged in pro-democracy and humanitarian work in Myanmar, along border areas and in the diaspora should be supported and empowered through programs, employment and education that provide them with opportunities to develop and allow them to continue contributing to their cause.

**Recommendation 9: Build on existing networks among Canadian educational institutions to provide teaching, scholarships and other professional development opportunities to students from Myanmar, including dedicated scholarships for Rohingya**

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes education as a fundamental human right regardless of one's race, gender, and religion. It asserts that elementary education should be compulsory while higher education must be "equally accessible to all on the basis of merit".[44] The 2021 military coup has deprived a majority of Myanmar's children and youth, particularly those from grassroots populations and ethnic minority communities, of their access to basic education. Due to existing inequalities, youth in Burma, especially those from minority ethnic communities, have had limited access to recognized higher education in Burma due to their nonconventional educational backgrounds at community schools, ethnic schools, or migrant schools.[45] Inclusive and equitable education remains a sector requiring further development and investment in Myanmar.

By providing scholarships and other forms of professional development to Myanmar students, Canadian educational institutions can empower individuals to uplift themselves and their communities. Such scholarships can benefit the recipients and, in turn, foster a peaceful Myanmar through the promotion of democratic

ideals. Canada should build on its existing networks and initiatives to support more Myanmar scholars through the provision of graduate, undergraduate, short-term development, and training scholarships and grants. It should also expand collaboration with universities in the region to better support displaced students from Myanmar and strengthen existing networks with the vibrant community of students and scholars from Myanmar in Canada. Finally, Canada should implement a streamlined process for Canadian universities to recognize credentials from non-state educational institutions in Myanmar.

**Recommendation 10: Regularly engage with and support diverse groups within the Myanmar diaspora in Canada**

There are approximately 17,000 Myanmar diaspora members across Canada,[46] represented by dozens of diaspora groups with various functions (fundraising, religious, community-based, youth, and activist). This diaspora has reliable channels, partners, and access to aid provision methods in Myanmar, along with networks with the NUG, EROs, and various civil society groups. The Canadian government should help strengthen ties between diaspora groups in the promotion of a multicultural and diverse Myanmar. This means expanding the voices of marginalized groups, especially the Rohingya, as members *of Myanmar* rather than separate communities. Canada should consider funding various Burmese community organizations either through grants, through requirements of Canada-funded organizations under Myanmar strategies to engage the Canadian diaspora, or through the explicit establishment of initiatives that lift voices from Myanmar, including conferences, committees, and working groups.

Current initiatives supporting Myanmar students as well as grassroots and diaspora organizing are cost-effective and produce notable impacts; Canada should continue to support and expand these programs.

## Theme 3: Continuing Canada's robust humanitarian support for the Rohingya while expanding to emphasize Rohingya's political voice and place as a part of Myanmar

**Recommendation 11. Continue strong humanitarian support for Rohingya in refugee camps in Bangladesh and expand other types of support**

A significant portion of Canada's aid budget for Myanmar is dedicated to the Rohingya in Bangladesh. We applaud this and want to see it continue. In addition to working through large multilateral organisations that run the camps, Canada should target its aid to programmes that are effectively providing educational, livelihood, and leadership training for

Rohingya to ensure opportunities to expand their quality of life and secure hope for their future. Bob Rae's 2018 report had as its first recommendation that "A fundamental principle of Canada's approach to the Rohingya crisis should be that we listen to the voices of the Rohingya themselves."[47] In making aid decisions, Canada must do more to develop, empower and actually follow these voices, across their diverse positions and perspectives.

**Recommendation 12. Strongly support existing grassroots efforts to develop a political voice for Rohingya and press other Myanmar actors to meaningfully include Rohingya in future political settlements**

A post-military Myanmar will not be politically stable or viable if Rohingya are not included as citizens. In addition to humanitarian support, Canada should take the lead in assisting emerging Rohingya efforts to organise politically in ways that include Rohingya in Myanmar, the camps, and the broader diaspora. Virtual consultative councils need administrative and technical support; Rohingya participating in governance discussions need leadership training and skill-building. This expansion of support for Rohingya's political inclusion will ensure that Canada's past humanitarian aid will not be wasted and that Rohingya will have a robust voice in Myanmar's future.

**Recommendation 13. Closely monitor inter-communal dynamics in Rakhine State to ensure the possibility of Rohingya's future return**

A series of recent military victories by the Arakan Army (AA) have given it control over more than half of the townships in Rakhine State, including those that used to have Rohingya majorities.[48] While AA is nominally allied with the resistance forces, there have been credible reports of the group leading violent attacks on Rohingya, increasing the flow of refugees to Bangladesh. On the other side, the Myanmar military is forcibly recruiting Rohingya, leading to increased tensions between the groups. While conditions do not allow for reconciliation activities, Canada should monitor developments in Rakhine State closely and see it as a key bellwether for the success of the revolution overall. Not only must Rohingya have a viable option of return with dignity and economic self-sufficiency, Canada can support other resistance actors in pressing AA to act responsibly and holding it accountable.

**Recommendation 14. Make public commitments to accept more refugees from Myanmar, including unmet commitments to resettle Rohingyas. Leverage this commitment with allies to develop a comprehensive Rohingya resettlement plan that can complement safe and dignified repatriation in the future**

Since Bob Rae's 2018 report recommended that Canada take many more

Rohingya refugees, Canada has only resettled about 1000 Rohingya refugees.[49] This is an unacceptably low number considering the scale of the crisis faced by the Rohingya, Canada's wealth and resources, and the fact that there is a vibrant and committed Myanmar diaspora ready to help people integrate into Canadian society. Since the coup, nearly 2 million additional people have been internally and externally displaced across Myanmar: a more robust refugee program is needed to give more people the chance to resettle in Canada.

Until recently, resettlement has been limited by Bangladesh's unwillingness to allow exit permits in a timely manner and to scale. The recent change in government seems to have opened a change in policy, with Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus recently declaring that the "resettlement process should be easy, regular, and smooth."[50]

Along with accepting more Rohingya refugees, Canada can lead a global group of allies in committing to accepting higher resettlement numbers. Not only will this alleviate some pressure on Bangladesh, it will likely be a necessary component of any successful repatriation plan.[51] While most Rohingya continue to prefer a safe, secure and dignified repatriation to Myanmar, that possibility is complicated by the Arakan Army's growing military control over much of Rakhine State. Expanded global resettlement commitments will likely be an essential part of any viable repatriation plan.

## Theme 4: Working through bilateral diplomatic relationships and multilateral initiatives to better support the people of Myanmar

**Recommendation 15. Leverage bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relationships to encourage global and regional actors to do more to support the people of Myanmar**

Canada needs to see Myanmar as an important component of its Indo-Pacific Strategy. The goal should be to engage with a wide range of partners, participate more in regional fora, and avoid exacerbating wider geopolitical tensions.

The UN continues to remain actively engaged with Myanmar, especially following the appointment of Julie Bishop as the most recent Special Envoy in April 2024. Ambassador Bob Rae's presence at the UN has also helped to maintain the body's focus on Myanmar's conflict, including through chairing the Working Group on Myanmar. Canada should continue to robustly use UN venues to support the resistance in Myanmar—including supporting new resolutions and encouraging enforcement of previous resolutions— while also seeking to limit the ways in which UN

engagement financially or politically supports the SAC.

ASEAN's 5-point consensus has guided its engagement on Myanmar since the coup, with very limited effect.[52] While recognizing the regional body's limitations, Canada should utilize regular meetings with it to ensure that Myanmar's situation remains on its agenda. Canada should particularly focus on ensuring that Thailand limits its restrictions on and persecution of refugees from Myanmar, especially youths, women and children, given the growth and vulnerability of the community there since the coup. Canadian diplomats should particularly explore and encourage creative approaches to Myanmar's conflict when ASEAN's rotating chair is amenable to greater action, such as with Malaysia in 2025.

As noted above, Bangladesh's recent political upheaval presents an opportunity for Canada to engage with a new government that is potentially more attentive to grassroots concerns and humanitarian crises, and encourage it to continue to lift educational, livelihood and other restrictions on Rohingya in refugee camps. Canada should increase its direct aid to Bangladesh, while linking it to expanded opportunities for Rohingya refugees, to ensure that the Bangladesh government does not have to continue to disproportionately shoulder the burden of supporting them.

**Recommendation 16. Continue and expand support for international efforts for documentation of crimes against humanity and legal accountability**

Canada has been a leading funder of the IIMM (Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar), which was established in 2018 with the mandate of collecting documentation of crimes against humanity in the Rohingya genocide. While the scope of the IIMM has expanded since the military coup to include violations committed by the Myanmar military and by revolutionary armed forces, it is not adequately resourced to process and assess this vast amount of information. Additionally, the IIMM has no mechanism to reimburse the many Myanmar people who contribute evidence, often at great personal cost and risk. Canada should continue to support the IIMM while either expanding its mandate or partnering with others to create a body that can carry out this essential supplemental support.

In 2019, Canada produced a statement calling for Myanmar to be brought to the ICC, and in 2022, Canada reiterated its support for the ICJ intervention into the Gambia's case against Myanmar for its genocide of the Rohingya. Canada must continue to follow both efforts and provide support as necessary.

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