

Myanmar, July 2021

The tragic human rights situation currently unfolding in Myanmar holds particular significance to our Sustainability Analyst Georgina who visited the Rohingya refugee camps in 2017. This was a life changing and eye-opening experience. Please read Georgie's poignant thoughts on her visit to the camp, our expectations on our portfolio companies in regard to Myanmar, and why Ethical Partners has recently signed on to the Investor Statement on Human Rights and Business Activities in Myanmar.

"Businesses should exert the maximum leverage on the military in Myanmar to halt what the High Commissioner for Human Rights has said may amount to crimes against humanity." Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

Myanmar's history has been riddled with violence and corruption that has only become worse in recent years. In 2017, we saw a surge of mass killings and forced starvation that forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people into Bangladesh. More recently, serious human rights violations have escalated in Myanmar as the military seized control at the beginning of 2021. Internal armed conflict between the military and ethnic armed groups are occurring on a daily basis, with an ever-increasing death toll. International sanctions have been imposed by the US, EU and UK but have not yet deterred the military from continuing to exercise its illegitimate authority.

The situation in Myanmar holds a particular personal significance for me, as in 2018, six months after the mass fleeing of Rohingya people from Myanmar, I was privileged to visit the Bangladesh refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar whilst working with UNICEF Australia.

It was one of the most eye-opening experiences of my life. I saw huge numbers of people arriving starving, sick, injured and in need of urgent life saving supplies. These people, many of whom had lost members of their families, were truly haunted by what they had witnessed. I met grown men who were crying as they retold their stories. I met and saw children who were drawing pictures of the atrocities that they had seen. I met young teenage girls who had seen and witnessed violence and rape that was unimaginable as well as now having the responsibility to care for younger siblings as they had lost parents. These fear stricken Rohingya people were living in uncertainty of not wanting to stay in a refugee camp but at the same time didn't want to return home to the violence. Many of them asked us not to force them home to Myanmar. Despite the atrocities that these people had witnessed, their resilience was unwavering.

I also saw the incredible collaboration and work of the multiple NGOs on the ground in Bangladesh and their ability to provide lifesaving supplies to save people's lives. However, despite their phenomenal effort, we also need to act to prevent these situations from even happening in the first place. That is why we firmly believe that corporate Australia needs to care and act decisively.

The United Nations has also called businesses to play their part, by upholding their human rights responsibilities, putting pressure on the military junta to halt grave human rights violations, preventing and mitigating harm linked to their business activities in Myanmar and ensuring that they are not rewarding the leaders of the coup. This expectation is in alignment with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), which state that all business enterprises, *including investors*, should take the necessary steps to cease, prevent, or mitigate adverse human rights impacts which they cause, contribute, or are directly linked to through their business relationships.

This is why Ethical Partners has recently signed on to the Investor Statement on Human Rights and Business Activities in Myanmar.

Our Ethical Partners EPORA process contains a requirement for our portfolio companies to uphold their corporate responsibility to respect human rights and to exercise their leverage to help end these serious human rights violations. Ethical Partners believes that businesses must be cognisant being linked to violations of human rights, such as the current situation in Myanmar, exposes both the company and their investors to material legal, financial, and reputational risks. Ethical Partners continues to view favourably investment in those companies that have clearly and proactively demonstrated their commitment to human rights.

We continue to engage with all relevant ASX companies to investigate and address any operations in Myanmar. We are asking them to:

- Map their business activities, relationships and investments across the value chain for any affiliations with the Myanmar military
- To address any actual or potential human rights impacts
- Show how they have taken steps to mitigate or prevent these
- Remediate any impacts
- Publicly report on their due diligence
- Provide support to in-country staff
- Use their leverage and collaborate with other businesses to support human rights in Myanmar.

Please see the full investor statement on Human Rights and Business Activities in Myanmar here:

https://media.businesshumanrights.org/media/documents/Investor_Statement_on_Human_Rights_in_Myanmar_9_June_2021.pdf

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