

Jesuit Refugee Service and the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Jesuits Call for Peace and Protection for the People of Myanmar

February 1, 2022 - On the one-year anniversary of a military coup that overthrew Myanmar's elected civilian government, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat of the Jesuits (SJES) call for concrete action, including an end to the violence that continues to terrorize the people of Myanmar, increased access to critical humanitarian assistance, and protection for those seeking safety and security.

Since the start of the conflict, an [estimated 32,000 people have fled Myanmar and over 400,000 have been internally displaced](#). Armed clashes, economic stress, and waves of COVID-19 have significantly deepened humanitarian needs in Myanmar with [14.4 million people in need of life-saving assistance](#), 5 million of which are children.

The weak and vulnerable are those who suffer the most. One internally displaced (IDP) family from Demoso Township shared, *"We are currently living in an IDP camp. My father is paralyzed and my mother is blind. After we were displaced, my family has been struggling with basic needs. Both of my younger brothers were killed by the military when they went back home just to bring some food for us. We were left with young children and old ill parents. We feel really depressed and hopeless."*

The future is blighted as youth are left with limited options but to join the resistance. The level of violence continues to escalate causing death and destruction and forcing families and communities to flee for their lives. Humanitarian agencies are responding to these increasing needs but face considerable barriers to operations.

As the Pope reminds us in his [comments on the ongoing conflict in Myanmar](#), "God will convert all hearts to peace" and we must "promote dialogue and respect for others." All must lay down their weapons and begin a process of peace and reconciliation that will lead to a prosperous and sustainable future for all. Those affected or displaced by violence within Myanmar must be provided with access to critical health and humanitarian services and the opportunity to return to their homes and communities.

Neighboring countries have offered a mixed response with some tightening or closing borders entirely and others returning refugees without their consent. With a mission of accompanying, serving, and advocating for the forcibly displaced, JRS and SJES urge countries in the region to offer protection for all who seek safety, to meet the needs of refugees already within their borders, and to ensure that any returns are safe and voluntary.

The time for action is now. The people of Myanmar must not be forgotten as they deserve protection and to live their lives in dignity and peace. The international community must join forces with those seeking a resolution to the crisis to ensure that families are brought back together, children are able to go back to school, adults are able to work again, and all are able to reconcile with God, self, and others. We express our solidarity with the people of Myanmar during this very difficult period of their history, inviting all to pray and work for justice, reconciliation, and peace in Myanmar.

About Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS):

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organization with the mission to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal,

learn, and determine their future. Founded by Pedro Arrupe SJ in 1980, JRS programs are now found in 57 countries worldwide serving over one million people.

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About the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES):

The Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) assists the Superior General to develop, coordinate, and promote social justice, ecology, and reconciliation works of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Founded in 1969 the Secretariat carries out its mission in collaboration with the six Jesuit conferences and various thematic networks. It establishes collaboration between apostolic sectors, the Church and the civil society groups paying special attention to social and ecological justice.

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