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PRESS RELEASE

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Myanmar: Human Rights Council must pressure authorities to release detainees

(Geneva) Amnesty International today urged the United Nations Human Rights Council to address the situation in Myanmar with resolute action by calling on the Myanmar authorities to release all those detained for participating in peaceful assemblies.

"We urge the Council to strongly condemn the ongoing grave human rights violations in Myanmar and to demand an immediate halt to the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations," Amnesty International said in a statement presented at the special session on Myanmar.

"It is the duty of the Myanmar government to account for all those detained by its law enforcement agents, military and other security forces. Detainees should not be held in secret places of detention, and must be granted access to independent lawyers, medical personnel and to family members."

"The Myanmar government has a duty to account for the whereabouts of those detained and to guarantee their safety from torture or other ill-treatment".

Amnesty International fears that the risk of torture and other ill-treatment in Myanmar remains high as widespread patterns of abuse of detainees, particularly during interrogation and pre-trial detention have become entrenched in Myanmar in a culture of total impunity spanning decades.

Amnesty International urged the Myanmar government to release all prisoners of conscience, among the 1,150 political prisoners detained before the crisis. The releases must include the more than 150 people arrested in August at an early stage of the current crisis, unless they are charged with a recognisably criminal offence.

Amnesty International called on the UN Human Rights Council, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar continues his important task by documenting the current situation including visiting the country and reporting to this Council, the General Assembly and the Security Council.

"While the Security Council must continue to focus on the situation in Myanmar and the threat it poses to peace and security in the region, the Human Rights Council should complement the Security Council's efforts by resolute action to address ongoing grave human rights violations in the context of the crackdown against peaceful protests," said Amnesty International.

Given the serious, long-standing human rights concerns in Myanmar, Amnesty International believes that it would be a positive contribution to the UN's consideration of Myanmar, if the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, were to visit the country.

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