

UN Expert Decries U.S. Sanctions Rollback on Myanmar Junta Allies

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A United Nations human rights expert has strongly criticized the United States for lifting sanctions on Myanmar military-linked firms and individuals, calling the decision “unconscionable” and a setback for global efforts to limit the junta’s access to weapons.

Tom Andrews, United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, issued a statement Wednesday condemning the United States decision to lift sanctions on

companies and individuals previously designated for aiding Myanmar's military regime, saying they had been implicated in supplying weapons, materiel and logistical support to the ruling military council, and that lifting restrictions could embolden further human rights abuses.

"The removal of these sanctions is a major step backward for international efforts to save lives by restricting the murderous junta's access to weapons," Andrews said. "It is unconscionable to undermine these efforts by rolling back sanctions on Myanmar arms dealers and junta cronies."

The Myanmar military, led by General Min Aung Hlaing, seized control from the civilian government in February 2021, overthrowing the elected administration of Aung San Suu Kyi. Since the coup, the country has faced ongoing armed conflict, with thousands killed, over 3.5 million people displaced, and widespread poverty impacting more than half the population.

Earlier this month, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing sent a letter praising President Donald Trump after U.S. tariff warnings. The letter commended Trump's leadership and referenced actions such as the closure of U.S.-funded media outlets reporting on the conflict, after which the United States lifted sanctions on several firms and individuals with known military ties.

Andrews said the delisted entities had facilitated the junta's weapons procurement and supply chains. "The junta's use of weapons of war to attack civilians has been devastating," he stated, adding that sanctions had previously reduced military imports by more than 30 percent from 2023 to 2024, partly due to United States and allied pressure.

He also said existing sanctions had shown measurable results, citing a decline in military imports into Myanmar of more than 30 percent from 2023 to 2024, a decline attributed in part to sanctions by the United States and allied governments.

Andrews, a former U.S. congressman, urged the Trump administration to reverse course and reinstate sanctions. "It is literally a matter of life and death," he said.

Special rapporteurs, such as Andrews, are independent experts appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council. They do not represent official UN policy but are tasked with monitoring and reporting on specific human rights issues around the world.