

Justice For Myanmar publishes details of Myanmar's tools of digital surveillance and repression

JFM reiterates call for a global arms embargo

Mar. 02, 2021, Yangon: Justice For Myanmar has today published details of technology used for digital surveillance and repression, found in Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Transport and Communications budget documents and an Elbit Systems unmanned aerial vehicle repairs proposal. The budget documents examined span from the 2018-19 financial year to 2020-21. The Ministry of Home Affairs is under the control of the Myanmar military and the minister is appointed by Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The Myanmar military had unrestricted access to all technology transferred to the Myanmar police and domestic intelligence agency, the Bureau of Special Investigation and, since the illegitimate February 1 military coup, has unrestricted access to technology procured by the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: *"These budget files show that the Myanmar military and the security forces under their control have continued to seek support from the West for their surveillance technology and tools of repression. The military are now using those very tools to brutally crack down on peaceful protesters risking their lives to resist the military junta and restore democracy, and to move against journalists who are exercising their right to report on protests. These items are dual use and should never have been sold while the military cartel continues to commit crimes against humanity and war crimes, operating outside of civilian control with total impunity. The international community made a critical mistake in normalising relations with the Myanmar military, allowing it to procure technology and carry out its corrupt business and failed to act decisively as the military committed a campaign of genocide against the Rohingya. Now is the time for them to take full responsibility to protect the people of Myanmar and immediately impose targeted sanctions and a global arms embargo in response to this brutal and illegitimate military coup and excessive use of violence, deliberately and ruthlessly targeting peaceful protesters."*

Budget documents detail numerous line items for the procurement of surveillance technology from Israel, USA, Canada and the EU. In some cases, purchases may be in breach of sanctions. Businesses implicated include Cellebrite and Elbit Systems of Israel, DataWalk, TCI, AVA, BlackBag Technologies, X1 and VMware of the USA; OpenText of Canada and MSAB of Sweden.

Yadanar Maung adds: *"All businesses that have provided technology to the Myanmar military and security forces should take all available measures to disable access, including blocking software and denying maintenance, parts and support. Had the international community acted decisively and concretely to hold the military to account for the genocide against the Rohingya in 2017, those perpetrators would have learned their lesson and this brutal coup could have been avoided."*

The source documents were provided to the New York Times, which investigated companies implicated.



Note to editors

View the details of businesses and items budgeted on the Justice For Myanmar website here:
<https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/tools-of-digital-repression>

Read the New York Times story, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/01/world/asia/myanmar-coup-military-surveillance.html>

Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business and for federal democracy and a sustainable peace.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Yadanar Maung

Email: media@justiceformyanmar.org

Website: <https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/>

Mirror: <https://justiceformyanmar.github.io/justiceformyanmar.org/>

Twitter: @justicemyanmar

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/justiceformyanmar.org/>