

To:

Mr. Sigve Brekke

President and CEO of Telenor Group

Date: 15th February, 2022

Subject: Open letter from civil society organisations and Myanmar users on Telenor's plan to sell its Myanmar business to a company affiliated with the military junta

[694 civil society organizations signed and issued a statement](#) on 12 February to oppose the Norway-based Telenor Group's sale of Telenor Myanmar to Investcom, a company affiliated with the military junta as the data of 18 million users could fall into the hands of the criminal junta through Investcom, endangering the lives of the Myanmar users. On February 10, a signature campaign was launched to protest the Norwegian government's and Telenor's plans on the sale. Within the first five days 240,000 people from all over the world have signed the [petition](#) addressing the President and CEO of Telenor Mr. Sigve Brekke together with the Prime Minister of Norway.

Since the coup on 1 February 2021, the people of Myanmar have experienced various forms of oppression and violence by the military junta such as arson, shooting, unlawful arrest, torture, sexual assault and confiscation of property that have been widely reported to the international community. The efforts of the Myanmar people to restore democracy to their country with the help of public protests against the military coup have been violently cracked down upon. More than ten thousand people have been arrested and tortured, and more than 1,500 innocent people, including children, have been killed.

The terrorist military junta not only suppressed unarmed democracy protests, but also limited access to the internet, access to the media, freedom of expression, and rights to information. In the past year, in addition to routinely ordering complete and partial internet shutdowns and blocking Internet services which the military did not want people to access, the military junta also forced telecom operators to raise the price of mobile internet and enacted various legal measures to cement their "[digital coup](#)" in Myanmar.

Even during the time of limited and restricted internet conditions, Myanmar people boycotted telecom operators such as military-linked Mytel and subscribed to the services of Telenor. Most customers placed their trust in Telenor as they hoped that a Norway-based company would operate in accordance with international human rights principles

Although Telenor Group is aware of the many atrocities the people of Myanmar are currently facing, we were disappointed to learn that Telenor Myanmar was the first company which decided to withdraw from the country ignoring the trust and the very reliance of people on them. In our first open letter on 31 January 2022, we have already expressed our grave concern regarding the announced sale of Telenor Myanmar to the Lebanese M1 Group owned by former Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati. This decision was not in line with the principle in [King Harald's 2014 speech](#) delivered at his state visit to Myanmar that stated: "Norway gives priority to advocating social responsibility on the part of Norwegian companies, both when they operate in Norway and abroad."

On 4 February 2022, [Myanmar Now reported](#) that Telenor Myanmar would be sold to Investcom Pte Ltd, of which the majority shareholder will be Shwe Byain Phyu Group, a military-linked conglomerate with ties to businesses sanctioned by the US, the UK and the EU. As part of the sale, Telenor customers' user data is also expected to be transferred into the hands of this entity.

Telenor Myanmar has not informed its customers on how their user data including call logs, internet logs, mobile money usage will be protected. If the sale is completed, Telenor would violate not only the trust of its users, but also business and human rights guidelines and international human rights laws.

The Government of Norway is a majority shareholder of Telenor Group holding over 53% of the company's shares. Hence, the decision made by Telenor on the sale of its Myanmar business will not only reflect negatively on the reputation of the company, but also on the government's carefully constructed image of upholding its commitment to human rights.

As the President and CEO of Telenor Group, we respectfully deliver this open letter so that you can reconsider your company's decision not only to avoid further reputational damage to the company, but also to prevent the loss of respect for Norway due to its connection to shameful human rights violations in Myanmar.

Together with this open letter, we have [enclosed a statement](#) signed by 694 Myanmar and international civil society organizations and a [global petition signed by 240,000 people](#) since 11 February 2022.

Copy:

1. Jonas Gahr Støre, The Prime Minister of Norway
2. The Norwegian Parliament (to all members of the parliament)
3. Tom Andrews, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situations of Human Rights in Myanmar
4. Ana Brian Nougères, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy
5. Irene Khan, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and Opinion
6. Mary Lawlor, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders
7. Clement Voule, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association
8. Bjørn Erik Thon, Director Norway Data Protection Authority (DPA)
9. Ranieri Sabatucci, EU Ambassador to Myanmar
10. Hilde Solbakken, Royal Norwegian Ambassador to Myanmar
11. Telenor Group's Investors
 - a. The government of Norway
 - b. Folketrygdfondet
 - c. BlackRock Institutional Trust Company, N.A
 - d. DNB Asset Managem AS
 - e. The Vanguard Group, Inc

- f. DWS Investment GmbH
 - g. Caisse de Depot et Placement du Quebec
 - h. Storebrand Kapitalforvaltning AS
 - i. KLP Forsikring
 - j. Lazard Asset Management, L.L.C.
12. Rita Skjaervik, Senior Vice President - Head of Group Strategy & External Affairs, Telenor Group
 13. Anita Househam, Director, Human Rights, Telenor Group
 14. Cathrine Stang Lund, Communications Director, Telenor
 15. Jon Omund Revhaug, CEO of Telenor Myanmar