

Press release:

Justice For Myanmar and ICJ Norway filed complaint with Norwegian police against Telenor for violating sanctions

Oslo and Myanmar | 28 August 2025

Justice For Myanmar and ICJ Norway filed a complaint with the Norwegian police against Telenor and the management of its Myanmar operations for violating Norwegian sanctions from 2018 to 2022. The sanctions in question are the Myanmar Regulation ('Myanmarforskriften'). The complaint was filed on December 19, 2024.

The Norwegian broadcaster NRK has recently published extensively on the role of Telenor in Myanmar, including articles on nrk.no, Podcasts and on TV and radio, especially on the sharing of sensitive network traffic data with the junta after the coup attempt on 1 February 2021. Today NRK has also published an article and broadcast a radio interview about our complaint.¹

The complaint details that Telenor violated sanctions in the following manner:

- a. From 2018 to 2021, it installed, maintained, and contributed to the setup of sanctioned surveillance equipment connected to the Myanmar state surveillance centre, which came under military control on 1 February 2021.
- b. Following the military's ongoing attempted coup from 1 February 2021, Telenor transferred the surveillance equipment to a subsidiary of M1 Group as part of Telenor's sale of its operations in Myanmar on 25 March 2022.
- c. Telenor transferred sensitive customer data to the junta.

"In a time when Norway and other Western countries increasingly use targeted sanctions against individual officials ('Magnitsky sanctions') and sectoral sanctions to promote respect for international law (including human rights and humanitarian law) and fight impunity, the complaint has a keen public interest," said Terje Einarsen, Head of the Board of ICJ Norway. "The Police must establish whether the Telenor Group violated the Myanmar sanctions."

Substantial evidence, handed over to Norwegian police, backs the complaint. This includes documents from Telenor and correspondence with the Myanmar telecommunications regulator. The complaint provides a detailed timeline, including the November 2017 purchase of the 'Lawful Interception Gateway' ('LIG'), facilitated by Huawei, from the German company Utimaco GmbH. The equipment was delivered to Myanmar in February 2018, immediately following the Myanmar military's brutal "clearance operations" against the Rohingya.

"Telenor needs to be fully investigated both for sharing sensitive network traffic data with the junta and for transferring so-called lawful interception equipment to a Myanmar military-linked company, a potentially deadly weapon that enables real time surveillance", said Yadanar Maung, spokesperson of Justice For Myanmar. "The Myanmar Regulation aims to prevent Norwegian companies or citizens

¹ See <https://www.nrk.no/dokumentar/toppjurister-anmelder-telenor-1.17536034>

from in any way assisting the military's international law violations. Therefore, it may be a fundamental breach of the Regulation to make this equipment and customer data available to the junta, for which there must be accountability. Telenor must also be fully investigated as to whether it aided and abetted the commission of crimes against humanity, including through the company's role in the executions of Jimmy and Phyo Zeyar Thaw by knowingly providing their personal data to the junta."

Context of Telenor's Myanmar investment

Even before the military's coup attempt, when Telenor first entered Myanmar, it was common knowledge that the military had a long history of committing human rights violations, that the military and police were not under civilian control, and that laws and regulations were not in place to protect citizens from electronic surveillance. Concerns were raised with Telenor regarding lawful interception requirements before they even entered Myanmar. If Telenor had done sufficient due diligence from the outset, they would have been aware that there was not genuine civilian democratic control of the telecommunications regulator and that there would be a long-term risk that the military would stage a coup. The military was already before the coup attempt controlling much of the government and had also been perpetrating alleged crimes against humanity and genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar 2016-2017, as ongoing cases before the ICJ and the ICC have confirmed. Telenor should have known that any telecommunications equipment, activities, and customer data could be compromised by military intervention.

Having an exemption license would be a defence to a possible sanctions breach. Justice For Myanmar and ICJ Norway are unaware of any Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs license provided to the Telenor Group to be exempt from the Myanmar Regulation. ICJ Norway has specifically asked Telenor about this, but Telenor has not indicated that such a licence was given. ICJ Norway and Justice For Myanmar have now – in light of new information relating to our complaint – strong reason to believe that no licence or exemption had or have been granted by the Ministry.

If Telenor has violated Norway's sanctions, it must be held accountable in the courts.

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