

## Royal Colleges across UK to illuminate to mark anniversary of deadly coup in Myanmar

*On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February - one year since the deadly coup in Myanmar took place – Royal Colleges across the UK will light up their buildings in red in a moment of solidarity and remembrance for health workers who have risked, and lost, their lives to provide care over the past year.*

The gesture led by the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET), and marked by the Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, is a tribute to the thousands of individuals who now find themselves in one of the deadliest countries in the world to be a health worker. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Surveillance System for Attacks on Healthcare, 283 attacks have been documented against health workers since February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, accounting for nearly 40% of the global total.

Health workers are being targeted by the military for attempting to treat those injured during protests, and many of those who manage to reach the injured lack the skills and knowledge necessary to treat severe traumas. This has contributed to the rapid and complex deterioration in Myanmar's health system since the coup.

For the past year, members of Royal Colleges and the broader UK health community, including the Myanmar diaspora in the NHS, have come together to support their colleagues in Myanmar through the provision of training and humanitarian assistance.

As Dr Denise Chaffer, President of the Royal College of Nursing and Chair of the RCN International Committee, noted:

*"The Royal College of Nursing stands in solidarity with our nursing colleagues in Myanmar who are continuing to work in perilous conditions to provide health care to those that need it. We continue to be gravely concerned by ongoing human rights abuses in Myanmar and the deliberate targeting of health care workers. Nurses there are risking their lives to keep their patients safe and their lives are in danger if the international community doesn't join together and speak out."*

Convened by THET, representatives from over 30 institutions have met bimonthly. Over 3,000 health workers have been directly supported in this way.

Alongside the lighting of Royal Colleges buildings, a public demonstration is to be held in Parliament Square, London, and a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Global Health will take place.

*"The Royal College of Physicians stands with its members and all healthcare professionals who have now endured the dangerous situation in Myanmar for 12 long months. We remain concerned for the safety of our colleagues as they attempt to do their jobs, just as we are for all those in Myanmar who rely upon them to protect their health and well-being. It is unacceptable that health professionals should face restrictions or violence as they attempt to care for others."* Andrew Goddard, President, Royal College of Physicians

President Mike McKirdy, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow said: *"By participating in this initiative we stand in solidarity with health professionals in Myanmar who risk their lives every day to deliver essential care to those in need, under hugely challenging circumstances. We have deep rooted connections with the medical community in Myanmar. Alongside the work we do to support our Fellows and Members based there, we have also introduced initiatives such as our online learning platform 'RCPSG Learning Hub for Myanmar', to enable healthcare staff to continue their own professional development. Our thoughts and prayers remain with them and all those caught up in the conflict."*

Professor Michael Griffin OBE, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, said: *"As a College, we feel it is important to show solidarity with healthcare workers in Myanmar, many of whom are members and fellows of RCSEd, and are continuing to provide care to those in need in the most challenging of circumstances. We wish to show our support to these individuals by taking part in this initiative."*

*'The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has had a long and extensive partnership with paediatric clinicians across Myanmar for many years. Despite the challenges since the coup, we have been able to continue to assist the delivery of essential care to newborns and children, supporting the doctors and nurses in Myanmar in collaboration with UK and international organisations. We continue to advocate for the safety of all children in Myanmar and the protection of all health workers who care for them.'* Dr Susan Broster RCPCH Global Officer

Dr Edward Morris, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said: *"As healthcare professionals, we strive to deliver the best possible care to the people that we treat. The situation in Myanmar has led to health workers being targeted for attempting to deliver this care, and we are deeply concerned for their safety. Everyone deserves the right to accessible and high-quality healthcare. Women and girls, who are always disproportionately impacted during times of crisis, deserve access to family planning services and safe maternity care. We believe health workers in Myanmar should be supported to deliver this care without fear of reprisal or harm."*

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Notes to Editor

1. For further information or interviews please contact: [charlotte.ashton@thet.org](mailto:charlotte.ashton@thet.org)
2. About Health Partnerships for Myanmar: Health Partnerships between the UK and Myanmar have been established since 2014. Since the coup the UK health community, including the Myanmar diaspora of health and social care workers here in the UK, have come together to support their colleagues in Myanmar. Convened by the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) representatives from over 30 institutions have met bimonthly. Key achievements include:
  - Advocacy and communication: garnering statements from key UK institutions including the British Medical Association, Association of Medical Royal Colleges and the Royal College of Nursing, placing multiple stories in print and broadcast media including the BBC, Channel 4 and The Guardian.
  - Education: Online guidance for health workers has been accessed over 15,000 times serving over 6000 doctors and nurses in Myanmar.
3. About THET: THET is a global health organisation with a vision of a world where everyone has access to healthcare. For over 30 years we have been working to achieve this by training and educating health workers in Africa and Asia in partnership with organisations and volunteers from across the UK. Founded in 1988 by Professor Sir Eldryd Parry, we are the only UK charity with this focus. From reducing maternal deaths in Uganda to improving the quality of hospital care for injured children in Myanmar, we work to strengthen local health systems and build a healthier future for all. In the past ten years alone, THET has reached over 100,000 health workers across 31 countries in Africa and Asia in partnership with over 130 UK institutions.