

Intrigue Deepens at U.N. Over Myanmar and Afghanistan

On the final day of the General Assembly's most important annual gathering, no one is expected to speak for Myanmar, but the envoy of Afghanistan's ousted government may yet take the podium.

By Rick Gladstone
Sept. 26, 2021

No official representing Myanmar will speak on Monday, the final day of the United Nations General Assembly plenary, U.N. officials said, in an apparent 11th-hour compromise that would deny a global platform to the country's warring democratic and militarist factions.

Myanmar's credentialed U.N. ambassador, U Kyaw Moe Tun, was scheduled to speak on Monday. Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun was appointed by the government that was toppled by a coup in February. He has since publicly assailed the junta that now governs the country, but which is not widely recognized by the international community.

Myanmar was previously included on a roster of speakers. But Stéphane Dujarric, the chief U.N. spokesman, said in an email on Saturday that "Myanmar is not on the speakers list."

Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun did not respond to requests for comment. But he told Reuters that he had withdrawn from the list. Myanmar, one of 193 U.N. member states, no longer appears on the lineup of country representatives who have yet to speak at the annual meeting.

Reuters also reported that unidentified members of the General Assembly Credentials Committee, a group that includes China, Russia and the United States, had reached an understanding under which Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun would be permitted to keep his U.N. seat for the time being as long as he did not speak. Diplomats from countries represented on the committee did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The United States has denounced the junta and defended Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun's right to represent Myanmar. China and Russia are significant weapons suppliers to Myanmar's armed forces and have been far less critical of the February coup.

The Credentials Committee has yet to deliberate formally on the credentials applications submitted by Myanmar's junta and the Taliban militants now controlling Afghanistan, which is also represented at the world body by an ambassador from a toppled government. That envoy, Ghulam M. Isaczkai, was still listed to speak as of Sunday, a prospect that could anger the Taliban.

The right to speak on behalf of a country at the United Nations is an important barometer of its government's international legitimacy and acceptance.

If the junta successfully ousted Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun in favor of its own envoy, that would represent a significant public relations victory for the ruling generals and a setback for the former civilian government led by Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi, the Nobel laureate imprisoned by the military since the coup on nebulous charges.

Up until now, at least, Mr. Kyaw Moe Tun has been an active advocate of his country's toppled government at the United Nations. Last week, for example, he posted a Twitter message thanking Derek H. Chollet, a senior State Department official, for meeting him and supporting "our efforts for restoration of democracy and promotion and protection of human rights."



Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun
@KyawTun62907405



Thank you Counselor Chollet for receiving us.
We thank the USG and its people for their continued support towards Myanmar people for our efforts for restoration of democracy and promotion and protection of human rights.
Your strong support will help prevail justice in Myanmar



Ned Price @StateDeptSpox

United States government official

.@StateDept Counselor Chollet met with @NUGMyanmar representatives and @KyawTun62907405 on the importance of building a more inclusive

and rights respecting future for all. We support those working peacefully to restore Burma's path to democracy. go.usa.gov/xMNHF

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