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January 21, 2022

Mr. Kazuhiko Takada
CEO
Yokogawa Bridge Corp.
27 Yamano-cho Funabashi city
Chiba prefecture 273-0026
Japan

Re: Yokogawa Bridge Corp.'s business operations in Myanmar

Dear Mr. Kazuhiko Takada,

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch to inquire about the business operations of Yokogawa Bridge Corp. in Myanmar, specifically its business relationship with Myanmar military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).

Human Rights Watch is an international human rights organization working in more than 100 countries around the world to document human rights violations and advocate for changes that respect and promote human rights. We have monitored the situation in Myanmar for more than three decades.

Yokogawa Bridge Corp. and Myanmar Economic Corporation

We understand that Yokogawa Bridge Corp. and MEC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in March 2014, according to Yokogawa Bridge Corp.'s 2015 earnings [document](#). According to the document, Yokogawa Bridge Corp. aimed to "build a relationship through technical cooperation," while "cultivating" MEC into an "amicable steel fabricator."

From that document, we further understand that "technological transfer through on-the-job training" for MEC by Yokogawa Bridge Corp. began in September 2014, including "measures to increase productivity and quality" and "technical guidance of construction engineering." Yokogawa Bridge Corp. also [created](#) an office in Yangon in July 2015, which the company says acts as a "base" for "information gathering and technological transfer."

The 2015 earnings document detailing the nature of the MoU between Yokogawa Bridge and MEC was available for public [viewing](#) as of January 25, 2021. However, by May 12, 2021, documents dated

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before 2019, including the 2015 earnings document, were [removed](#). As of January 19, 2022, the documents remain unavailable on the company website.

In a Yokogawa Bridge Holdings Corp. document titled “[Fifth mid-term business plan 2020 – March 2022](#),” the company said it will “strengthen” its relationship with MEC and seek “further development and expansion.”

Human Rights Watch notes with concern that Yokogawa Bridge Corp. is working directly with MEC, a Myanmar military conglomerate. MEC is [owned](#) by the Ministry of Defense and is a “direct source of revenue” for the Myanmar military. Specifically, MEC is controlled by the Quartermaster General's Office.

As summarized in the appendix below, Myanmar’s military has long been responsible for serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including atrocity crimes. On February 1, 2021, the military carried out a coup against the elected civilian government and has remained in power since. The United States, United Kingdom, European Union, and Canada have sanctioned MEC as well as the other military conglomerate, Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), for their role in generating significant revenues that help fund the military’s abuses and enshrine its impunity.

In accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, companies have a responsibility to carry out human rights due diligence in relation to their business operations. This would include Yokogawa Bridge Corp.’s business operations in Myanmar.

Request for Details on Yokogawa Bridge Corp.’s Business Operations in Myanmar

To better reflect the latest information and actions initiated by the Yokogawa Bridge Corp. in relation to its MoU with the MEC, Human Rights Watch requests your response to the following questions:

1. Please disclose in detail the nature of the business relationship between Yokogawa Bridge Corp. and MEC.
2. Since the February 1, 2021, military coup, has Yokogawa Bridge Corp. initiated actions to review its business with the MEC under the 2014 MoU, including decisions to suspend business? Please provide details, including the duration for any decision to suspend all operations under the 2014 MoU.
3. Does Yokogawa Bridge Corp. have any other ties with MEC other than the MoU, such as joint ventures? If so, please disclose the nature of any other such ties.

We welcome your responses to the questions above, and any other related information that the company wishes to provide. This information will be reflected in

our publications. We request that you please send your response by **February 4, 2022**, to the Human Rights Watch Asia Program Officer, Mr. Teppei Kasai, who is based in our Tokyo office and can be reached at kasait@hrw.org or 070-4466-3147.

We also welcome an opportunity to discuss our concerns in person or on the phone with you or other representatives.

Thank you for your consideration regarding these important matters.

Sincerely,

Brad Adams
Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

Appendix

Human Rights Watch has long expressed concern about the role of international corporations doing business with the military, known as the Tatmadaw, and military controlled companies in Myanmar. These concerns have been heightened by the February 1, 2021, coup and the formation of the military junta, the State Administration Council.

February 1, 2021, Coup

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military arrested the civilian leaders of the recently elected national and state governments and announced a one-year “state of emergency.” The military arrested de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the deposed president Win Myint, and several dozen other senior officials in early morning raids in the capital, Naypyidaw.

Since the military takeover, millions of people have taken to the streets across the country and peacefully protested for a return to a democratically elected civilian government. As part of a widespread and systematic attack on the population, security forces have repeatedly fired on and otherwise used excessive force to disperse and harm protesters. Police and soldiers have killed nearly 1,500 people and detained more than 10,000.

Human Rights Watch and others have determined that the military abuses since the coup amount to crimes against humanity. Apparent crimes against humanity committed since February 1 include murder, enforced disappearance, torture, rape and other sexual violence, severe deprivation of liberty, and other inhumane acts causing great suffering.

Military Abuses in Rakhine State

Since August 2017, Myanmar’s security forces have waged a campaign of ethnic cleansing and carried out numerous crimes against humanity and acts of genocide including killings, sexual violence, and the forced removal of the ethnic Rohingya population in Rakhine State. As a result, more than 740,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in the past two years.

A United Nations-mandated Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) found sufficient evidence to call for the investigation of senior military officials for crimes against humanity and genocide against the Rohingya.

In a September 2019 [report](#), the FFM found that “any foreign business activity” involving Myanmar’s military and its conglomerates Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) pose “a high risk of

contributing to or being linked to violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law. At a minimum, these foreign companies are contributing to supporting the Tatmadaw's financial capacity.”

The FFM called for the “financial isolation” of the military to deter continuing and future violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

A March 4, 2020, report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar recommended “that companies operating in Myanmar respect human rights throughout their work and supply chains, in line with the [United Nations] Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.” He added that companies “must undertake heightened due diligence, particularly regarding conflict areas, and consider declining sales if the risks are found to be too high.”

On May 12, 2021, the United Nations Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (Working Group on Business and Human Rights) [stated](#) “businesses must uphold their human rights responsibilities and put pressure on the military junta to halt grave human rights violations.” Specifically, the Working Group urged companies to “act in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to avoid contributing to human rights violations, or becoming complicit in crimes if they continue to operate in Myanmar.”