



Dr José Ramos-Horta at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 ©The International Institute for Strategic Studies

MYANMAR AT THE SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE 2026: AN ABSENCE THAT SPEAKS

What does it mean when Myanmar's civil war goes unnamed at Asia's premier security forum?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. *At the SLD 2026, only one head of state out of fifty-four ministerial speakers publicly named Myanmar.*
2. *The bloc's "centrality" rhetoric was invoked without its central test: the Five-Point Consensus was not cited once.*
3. *The fourth plenary discussed methamphetamines, human trafficking and ghost fleets without naming the country these flows originate from.*

MYANMAR AT SHANGRI-LA 2026

FONDEMOS' VIEW

Myanmar's erasure from the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 is not an oversight but a diplomatic signal: the international agenda is quietly absorbing Min Aung Hlaing's **junta** as a **manageable status quo**.

Across three days, forty delegations, fifty-four ministerial speakers, and multiple plenary sessions, **Myanmar was named once**, by one head of state. Only Timor-Leste's President, José Ramos-Horta, dared call the civil war "*a stain on ASEAN's otherwise impressive catalogue of successes*".

Every other ASEAN voice, including the bloc's own Secretary General, invoked "*centrality*", that principle by which **ASEAN must remain the diplomatic pivot of regional security** without naming what is shattering it. Dr Kao Kim Hourn himself warned that "*centrality without unity is an empty claim*", framing both as values to safeguard against external pressures, yet said nothing of the internal war that most actively undermines them out. Washington, Beijing, Tokyo, Canberra, Delhi: silence.

This silence is not neutral. It follows the junta's 2025-2026 sham elections, which handed Min Aung Hlaing the presidency while Aung San Suu Kyi remains detained. Coupled with the junta's exclusion from the Cebu summit a few weeks earlier, it produces a **hybrid regime** between **formal ostracism** and **practical normalisation**.

The fourth plenary session discussed scam compounds, methamphetamines, human trafficking, and ghost fleets without uttering the country where these flows originate. **The cause is obscured while its effects are catalogued.**

The Five-Point Consensus, the bloc's minimal framework since 2021, was not cited once. **The rhetoric is brutal.** The more the Sino-American "great peace" advances on the surface, the more peripheral conflicts disappear from the grammar of summits, even though they intensify on the ground.



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« For the junta, for Beijing, for Moscow, this vacancy is a silent victory. »

It strips the National Unity Government (NUG), the ethnic resistance and Burmese civil society of the **only annual regional stage where Washington, Tokyo, Canberra, Delhi and ASEAN converge.**

The opening of Timor-Leste's President must not remain orphaned.