

Burma

Myanmar Regime Steps Up Violence to Tackle General Strike

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YANGON — Another general strike planned by anti-regime protesters on Monday faced heavy crackdowns by the security forces in many cities, leaving at least three protesters dead, many injured and several hundred detained.

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Photo: Two protesters shot dead in Myitkyina, Kachin state.

The military regime has dealt with two previous general strikes on Feb. 22 and Feb. 28 since it seized power on Feb. 1. Millions of protesters took to the streets across the country and the security forces struggled to cope with the numbers of protesters.

For the general strike on Monday, the security forces took preemptive action with deployments and gunshots fired throughout Yangon through the night. Many residents believed the security forces intended to scare people away from protesting.



Residents from Pyimana in Naypyitaw joined the general strike against the military regime on Monday.

But thousands of protesters took to the streets across the country on Monday and faced heavier crackdowns than in previous days.

In Myitkyina, Kachin State, protesters faced shooting soon after arriving in the streets in the morning. Two men, 22 and 62, died on the spot in the shooting. Witnesses said at least seven protesters were injured by gunshots and about 50 protesters were detained.

In Shwegu Township, Kachin State, the security forces arrested more than 80 protesters, plus one journalist, according to Myitkyina News Journal based in the state. It reported that four detainees

remained in custody and had been charged.

The security forces, including soldiers, had been stopping vehicles and pedestrians in Yangon to search for anti-regime posters and placards to prevent protesters from gathering.



Military vehicles chase motorcycles driven by six protesters and hit them.

Despite early crackdowns, thousands of protesters managed to demonstrate peacefully against the regime before facing heavy crackdowns.

Many towns in Shan State and Yangon, Mandalay, Ayeyarwady and Bago regions have seen numerous arrests and casualties during the protests.

At noon in Mandalay, military vehicles chased down motorcycles being ridden by six protesters and deliberately hit them. Two of the activists, include a teenager, were severely injured.

In Pyapon Township, Ayeyarwady Region, a protester was shot dead and four others injured as soldiers and police cracked down on a sit-in protest. One of those injured is in a critical condition, a resident told The Irrawaddy.

In Pyapon, at least 50 protesters were detained on Monday morning, of which 14 were later released.

The security forces also raided the offices of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society led by prominent activist Ko Min Ko Naing in Thingangyun Township, Yangon, and the Myanmar Now news publication. Computers and other materials were seized, according to witnesses.

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Myanmar Military Regime's Forces Establish Bases at Civilian Schools, Universities, and Hospitals

Yangon—At least 20 government universities, school and hospitals in major cities including Yangon, Mandalay, Magway, Monywa and Ayeyarwady have been occupied by security forces of the military regime as their base camps.

On Sunday night, security forces that have occupied a teaching hospital in Yangon's North Oakkalapa Township as their base camp, opened fire and exploded percussion grenades in an attempt to intimidate a crowd that had appeared in front of the hospital opposing its use by the military.

A resident was wounded in the leg when shot by security forces.

Also, residents of Yangon's Yankin Townships staged protest against an encampment of security forces at the township's general administrative department office last night.

Security forces who have occupied Yangon's Waibargi Infectious Disease Hospital, which had been left behind by doctors and medical staff taking part in nationwide civil disobedience movement, also conducted a crackdown against people opposing their occupation of the hospital. Security forces used slingshots, rubber bullets and sound grenades.

Sunday night, security forces occupied the Dagon University of Yangon as their base camp.

They also used hundreds of percussion grenades and fired warning shots in several Yangon's townships to frighten residents. Some houses were hit with live rounds. Security forces destroyed windows of a dozen of vehicles and closed circuit television systems in Kamayut Township last night.

Residents said that security forces opened fire at two rooms of an apartment that had switched lights on.

In the country's second biggest city Mandalay, security forces have occupied all universities as well as 500 and 300 bed hospitals as the base camps.

On Saturday, security forces retreated back from an encampment at the Loikaw University in Kayah State after facing a protest by residents.

During their retreat, security forces left behind more than 200 rounds of ammunition including live bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas. Residents transferred the ammunition to the police force of the Kayah State.

Some said that military is setting up base camps near residential neighborhoods in order to firmly manage their administrative operations.

Dr. Sai Khaing Myo Tun, the president of the Myanmar Teacher Federation, told The Irrawaddy the military is trying to set up base camps as a frontline near population centers because their mobility had previously delayed due to roadblocks of anti-regime protesters.

"This is believed to [make possible a] crackdown on the anti-regime protest leaders at night," said Dr. Sai Khaing Myo Tun, concerning about setting base camps of security forces.

Ko Than Kyaw Oo, student union chair of Sagaing Region's Monywa University which is being used as military base camp, said that students condemned the military use and they will drive the security forces out of the university.

"Universities are not for the military. Campuses are not the place for the military dogs (soldiers)," said Ko Than Kyaw Oo.

The 88 Generation Peace and Open Society said on Sunday that according to the Geneva Convention, school, hospital and religious buildings are to be protected zones for refugees.

Occupying those protected zones by the police and military is breaching the Geneva Convention and International Humanitarian Law, said the group.

The group's office in Yangon also was raided by the police and soldiers on Monday. A safe box, computers, office's usages and paintings were taken.

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Myanmar Regime Detains Increasing Numbers and Steps Up Violence

Yangon - More than 200 anti-regime protesters, including members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), were arrested by the security forces on Sunday during an intensified crackdown against pro-democracy demonstrations in Myanmar.

The military regime has stepped up violence across the country, using tear gas, rubber and live bullets, deadly air-guns firing lead pellets and sound grenades.

On Sunday night, police and soldiers used hundreds of the explosives, that are used to simulate a grenade in training, and fired warning shots in several Yangon townships.

Some Yangon homes were hit by bullets and numerous vehicle windows were smashed by the security forces.

In Hlaing Township, a prominent NLD Muslim member, U Peter, the father of young NLD lawmaker Sithu Maung, who won a seat in the Nov. 8 general election, was detained.

The lawmaker, who is a member of the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) - which represents elected MPs and supports the anti-regime demonstrations - is now in hiding and faces an arrest warrant.

Sithu Maung posted on Facebook on Monday that his father was beaten by the security forces during the arrest.

U Khin Maung Latt, 58, an NLD ward chairman from Pabedan Township and a campaign manager for Sithu Maung during the November election, was arrested and tortured to death on Saturday night.

Security forces cracked down on anti-regime demonstrations led by thousands of university students in Mandalay on Sunday. Around 100 protesters were detained and several people were injured.

A video on social media shows a man dressed as a medic being kicked and beaten severely by police until he is unconscious.

The man was also dragged away on the ground by the police.

Another video shows a Mandalay protester being severely beaten by the police with sticks while he lies in a drain.

A Mandalay University student union member trying to secure the release of detained students told The Irrawaddy on Monday that the security forces are using tear gas, sound grenades, rubber and live bullets and batons without giving warnings to protesters to disperse.

The student union has compiled a list of 73 people who have been reported missing by their families during the Sunday crackdown.

“The violent crackdowns are unacceptable,” the student said.

The security forces also arrested 130 anti-regime protesters in Yangon’s Shwepyithar Township on Sunday, according to a legal group assisting those detained.

Some injured protesters are being taken to military hospitals, the lawyer told The Irrawaddy.

During a crackdown against a pro-democracy demonstration in Bagan, one of Myanmar’s Unesco World Heritage Sites, on Sunday about six protesters were detained and several were injured.

A male protester was injured in his neck and chin by a live round.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners on Sunday, said 1,790 people, including elected leaders, election commissioners, journalists, writers, actors and striking civil servants, have been detained.

It said 1,472 of them are still in detention or have faced charges.

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Myanmar Regime Steps Up Vehicle and Pedestrian Searches in Yangon

Yangon — Police and military personnel are stopping pedestrians and vehicles in Yangon’s Sanchaung Township to search for the posters, helmets and goggles of anti-regime protesters.

Witnesses said the police stopped a car in Sanchaung, one of the major sites in Yangon where protesters gather, at around 9.30am on Monday, and arrested those inside after finding anti-regime posters in the trunk.

“They are deployed along Kyuntaw Street. They don’t stay on the street but are hiding in corners. There are 15 troops below my apartment. They are in police uniforms but most are wearing army boots,” said a witness.



Police arrest a man after they found anti-regime posters in the trunk of his car. / The Irrawaddy

Sanchaung residents are warning protesters not to come to the township as police are also making arrests on Baho and Maha Myaing roads along with Kyuntaw Street.

“They are waiting at the corners to make arrests. They are deployed along Kyuntaw and Myaungmya streets. I can see them from my house. They are removing the barriers at the corner of Kyuntaw and Chantha streets with a bulldozer,” Sanchaung resident Ma Moe Moe told The Irrawaddy.



A man who was hit by five rubber bullets by the police on Baho Road. / The Irrawaddy

Police and military personnel entered Sanchaung at around 8am and residents said they heard gunshots on Pyapon and Kyuntaw streets.

A man was hit by five rubber bullets fired by police on Baho Road. At around 10pm on Sunday, police and military personnel entered several Yangon townships and fired at homes with bullets and slingshots while smashing the windows of vehicles parked in the streets. The Irrawaddy heard reports of around 50 vehicles having their windows smashed on Sunday night.

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Myanmar Military Sues Charity for Supporting Civil Servants on Strike

In their attempt to stop the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), which has shown a growing defiance of the military regime, the military has sued the leaders of the Yangon-based Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS), for allegedly supporting the movement.

The well-known social welfare organization has been assisting wounded anti-coup protesters and providing funerals for those killed in the security forces' crackdowns. Since the Feb. 1 coup, more than 50 people have died from police and soldiers shooting at peaceful protesters across the country.

U Kyaw Thu, the chairman of the FFSS, was sued for incitement under Article 505 (a) of the Penal Code on March 4, hours after his FFSS office in Yangon's North Dagon Township was raided by security forces.

At 12 a.m. Thursday, during a raid on the office of the FFSS, volunteers and staff present at the office were beaten and the organization's computers and electronic devices were confiscated.

The office of the Free Funeral Service Society (FFSS) in North Dagon Township, Yangon, after it was raided at 12 a.m. on Thursday. / Ye Kyaw Thu

Daw Myint Myint Khin Pe, the finance officer of the FFSS and the wife of U Kyaw Thu, was sued under the same charge at the Mayangone Township police station on Feb. 25. The charge carries up to three years' imprisonment, according to the regime's amendment to the provision made last month.

They are now in hiding. The military is hunting them and accusing them of misusing donations for free funeral services.

The regime's mouthpiece Myanmar News agency said that during the raid, they seized the documents, as they did not find the finance officer. It said the FFSS accepted donations of more than 613 million kyats and US\$20,670 from nearly 500 individuals and companies from Feb. 10 to March 3, to support civil servants taking part in the CDM.

Of those, the FFSS supported 2,008 people who are in the CDM with 100,000 to 200,000 kyats each and provided cash assistance to container truck drivers and railway workers to join the CDM, the paper said.

Initiated by the medical professional on Feb. 3, the CDM movement is joined by the education, energy, construction, and media workers under the Ministry of Information and hundreds of police in support of the democratically elected government. They support the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which was formed by lawmakers elected in last year's vote.

The military also intensified its threat against the civil servants who are taking part in the CDM, while urging them to come work for them. Meanwhile the Myanmar security forces stepped up crackdowns and nighttime raids on the weekend.

Following the military's killings of protesters, the FFSS recently announced it wouldn't provide family members of police or military personnel with funerals and health care.

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