

Burma

China Faces Backlash for Demanding Tougher Action on Myanmar's Protesters...

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Myanmar's pro-democracy supporters have condemned China's calls for the military regime to take tougher action against peaceful protesters amid allegations that Chinese-owned garment factories were set on fire. Beijing has demanded Myanmar's security forces act to protect Chinese interests and citizens.

As the security forces killed at least 70 peaceful protesters across Myanmar on Sunday, China said many Chinese-owned factories in Hlaing Tharyar's industrial zone were looted and burned. China urged the military regime to take immediate action against protesters.

Chinese government mouthpiece the Global Times said 32 factories built with Chinese investment had been vandalized, with around US\$37 million (52 billion kyats) in damage.

Soon after the Chinese Embassy statement, the junta declared martial law in Hlaing Tharyar Township, where more than 37 anti-regime protesters were killed by the security forces during peaceful protests on Sunday.

Nearly a million social-media users shared a post in Burmese and Chinese saying: "We totally condemn the Chinese Embassy's statement, only standing for its self-interest. China has been silent and failed to condemn the military regime, despite hundreds of people losing their lives during the peaceful protests."

One pro-democracy comment said: "Shame on you, China! You totally ignore the unlawful killing of Burmese people and only speak out for your self-interest."



Smoke rises from a Chinese-owned factory in Hlaing Tharyar, Yangon's industrial zone, on Sunday.

Another social media user said: "While we are losing our lives and counting dead bodies, China accused Myanmar's people of burning its garment factories and urged the regime to take serious action against innocent citizens. It is demanding more peaceful protesters are killed?"

Other comments accused China of totally ignoring the ongoing atrocities committed by the junta,

saying there have been no reports of destruction of private property nor thefts by protesters.

An observer of Myanmar's relations with China, who asked not to be named, told The Irrawaddy that the Chinese statement was a signal of approval from Beijing for the military to kill more innocent people.

"China is failing to condemn the coup and the deadly crackdown on protesters. Now it urges the prosecution of people to protect its property. Myanmar's people won't forget it. It is not a good sign for existing Chinese investments and future projects under the Belt and Road Initiative," she said.

Human rights activist U Aung Myo Min told The Irrawaddy that the military repeatedly claimed it launched bloody crackdowns only after protesters became violent. China's accusation about vandalism endorsed the military's claim of violent acts by protesters, he said.

"China totally turns a blind eye to the acts committed by the military. There are lots of videos of looting, shooting and other lawless behavior by the security forces during crackdowns on protesters," U Aung Myo Min said.

"If China really cares about its interests, it needs to condemn the military and endorse serious UN action against the military," he said.

"Anti-Chinese sentiment has emerged among people, including boycotts of Chinese products. It means that wherever China invests, the people will oppose it. I believe there will be more challenges for Chinese investment," U Aung Myo Min added.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-faces-backlash-demanding-tougher-action-myanmars-protesters.html>

China Calls on Myanmar Junta to Punish Arsonists who Attacked Factories in Yangon

Global Times, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, has called on the military regime to punish the people who attacked garment factories in Yangon on Sunday.

In an editorial the Beijing-based newspaper said, "We strongly urge the Myanmar side to stop these kind of crimes, punish the perpetrators and compensate Chinese factories for their losses."

The Chinese embassy in Yangon said many Chinese staff were injured or trapped in arson attacks by unidentified assailants on garment factories in Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar Township and called on Myanmar to protect Chinese property and citizens.

The Global Times said, "The violent attacks were apparently well organized and planned. One twitter account tweeted a warning to the Myanmar military government saying: 'If one civilian is killed one Chinese factory will become ashes.' This verified account belongs to the Founder and Executive

Director of Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN). This is just one example of inflammatory instigations.” The London-based BHRN was founded in 2015.

The editorial also claimed that China “doesn’t interfere heavily in the Myanmar situation” but “tries its utmost to promote peaceful settlement of the crisis according to law.”

It said, “China holds friendly ties with all parties in Myanmar. No matter which party holds power, Myanmar maintains friendly cooperation with China.”

China’s failure to condemn the Feb. 1 military coup has sparked increasing anger across Myanmar as mass protests against the regime sweep the country.

Thousands of anti-coup protesters gathered at the Chinese embassy every day last month. Fury towards Beijing has grown as China continues to defend the junta, describing the coup as an “internal affair” at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

In response to the increasing anger directed at Beijing, China’s ambassador to Myanmar, Chen Hai, told local media that the current situation in the country is “absolutely not what China wants to see.”

Chen Hai also said Beijing was not informed in advance of the military takeover, adding that China hoped all parties in Myanmar “could handle the current problem properly through dialogue and consultation and lead the country back on track as soon as possible.”

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said last week that all parties in Myanmar should keep calm and exercise restraint, address their differences through dialogue and consultation within the constitutional and legal framework, and continue to advance the democratic transition.

“China will not change the course of promoting friendship and cooperation, no matter how the situation evolves,” Wang Yi said in his annual press conference. Instead, Beijing will try to bring about reconciliation by engaging with all relevant parties, he said.

But Myanmar citizens responded by stepping up criticism of China and its economic interests in Myanmar, including oil and natural gas pipelines, mines and factories.

In February, Beijing held an emergency meeting with Myanmar officials from the Home Affairs and Foreign ministries.

According to a leaked document, Bai Tian, the director-general of the Department of External Security Affairs under the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asked the military regime to assure the security of oil and natural gas pipelines, following the increase in anti-Chinese sentiment in Myanmar because of Beijing’s stance on the coup.

That drew a sharp response from the people of Myanmar on social media, with some suggesting that whether or not the pipelines are blown up is an “internal affair.”

Global Times said in its editorial that, “China is the strongest country in the region and we respect every country’s handling of their own internal affairs. From a long-term perspective, this basic policy has become an important condition for our neighboring countries to keep their independence and autonomy.”

It continued, “All parties involved in Myanmar hope China will support them, but if China really imposes its own position and interests on the country, it will go against the long-term wishes of Myanmar society. Therefore, even though some people are willing to see China intervene, they don’t

have any reason to justify such perspective. Using factories funded by China as hostage to manoeuvres in Myanmar's domestic struggles will never be permitted."

The Global Times said also that while the West is now publicly supporting the National League for Democracy (NLD), "they have previously fiercely blamed the NLD for the Rohingya issue. Aung San Suu Kyi's reputation has changed radically in the West's public opinion." China backed Daw Aung San Su Kyi's government at the UNSC in 2017.

The editorial said, "China respects Myanmar people's right to handle their own affairs, and emphasizes a peaceful solution under the framework of Myanmar constitution and laws. This is China's sincere goodwill toward Myanmar."

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