

Burma

Myanmar's Ethnic Chinese Deny Allegiance to Beijing as They Risk Lives Against Junta.

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“Please don’t hate Chinese in Myanmar. We were born here,” a mournful mother of an ethnic Chinese teenager appealed to the people of Myanmar shortly after her son was shot dead by police in Yangon.

An ethnic Chinese, Khant Nyar Hein or Lin Yaozong, 18, was shot down on the street by the military regime’s security forces on Sunday in Tamwe Township while he was taking part in a protest. He became one of more than 200 civilians killed by police and soldiers in a flurry of lethal force unleashed on peaceful protesters following the Feb. 1 coup.

Those who learned of the fate of the first-year medical student were saddened and sympathetic to his mother, who has lost her only son.

But the grieving mother has something larger to worry about —the growing anti-Chinese sentiment among Myanmar’s population due to Beijing’s friendly and internationally protective stand in support of the Myanmar military regime in spite of the deadly crackdown. China is Myanmar’s biggest neighbor in the north and has long history of cozy relations with Myanmar’s generals.



Mourners attend Khant Nyar Hein’s funeral on Mar 16. /CJ

China recently drew the ire of Myanmar’s people when Beijing urged the regime to immediately take effective measures to ensure the safety of Chinese companies and personnel after some Chinese-owned factories in Yangon’s Hlaing Thayar were set fire during a confrontation between security forces and protesters in the area. The statement from the Chinese Embassy in Yangon failed to condemn the fatal use of force and expressed no sorrow over the bloodshed.

At her son’s funeral Tuesday, Khant Nyar Hein’s mother attempted to explain to the people of Myanmar that ethnic Chinese born in Myanmar are not the same as those born in mainland China.

“We are full of Burmese spirit. I have lost my son because they (the coup leaders) are greedy for power,” said the mournful mother, Ah Xin. “I will be holding a grudge [against the junta] until the

world ends,” she said in tears.

Khant Nyar Hein is not first person of Burmese-Chinese descent killed during the brutal crackdown by the military regime’s security forces.

Kyal Sin, also known as Angel or by her Chinese name, Deng Jia Xi, was shot in the head during a heavy-handed police crackdown on anti-regime protesters in downtown Mandalay in early March. The 19-year-old, a Taekwondo instructor has become a national icon in defiance of the military regime among teenagers in the country protesting the dictatorship. Before she left for the protest, she wrote on Facebook that her wish was to donate her organs if something happened to her.



Medical students attend Khant Nyar Hein’s funeral on Mar 16./CJ

Another anti-coup protester, Kyaw Win Ko also known as Tai Tai, was shot dead by security forces on March 14 in North Dagon, Yangon. His friend told The Irrawaddy that family buried the 28-year-old on his birthday.

“He was always willing to help others. He was very brave. I am very proud of him. He was like a brother to me,” Ko Nay Lin said.

Since the military staged its coup, young people of Chinese descent joined young people across the country as they took to the streets, showing their stand against the junta.

They also gathered several times in front of Chinese Embassy in Yangon, demanding that China stop supporting the coup leaders. They chanted in Mandarin, telling Beijing they supported the release of Myanmar State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and others detained and wanted to see the restoration of democracy in their homeland.

“We saw a lot of anti-Chinese remarks on social media. We are very sad. I hope, people in the country realize that we are also part of this country. This is also our fight for democracy,” a teenager from the Burmese-Chinese Youth Association in Mandalay, who asked not to be named, told The Irrawaddy.

“The Chinese Communist Party does not represent all the Chinese citizens and all Burmese-Chinese here. We would do whatever we can to restore democracy in this country,” he said.



Family members and friends arrive at Kyal Sin’s funeral on March 4 in Mandalay. / The Irrawaddy

China has faced severe criticism after it failed to condemn the military and blocked the UN Security Council from taking action against the coup leaders. Thousands of protesters targeted the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar for protests, accusing Beijing of supporting military junta following the coup. Anti-Chinese sentiment was sparked among the population, including calls for boycotting Chinese products and investment.

On Tuesday, hundreds of mourners including medical students in white duty coats gathered at Khant Nyar Hein's funeral and flashed the three-finger salute, a sign for resistance to the coup. They chanted, "Our revolution must prevail."

Speaking in Mandarin, the grieving grandpa of the Khant Nyar Hein directed his words at his grandson's funeral to those in power in Beijing.

"Chinese government! We are the overseas Chinese. In consideration of us, please help Myanmar citizens and overseas Chinese in Myanmar who are seeking democracy," he said.

"We hope you [the Chinese government] will think about us, the overseas Chinese. Please have sympathy for our democracy struggle. Let's bring a rollback!" he added.

The Irrawaddy

P.S.

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