

Burma

2,000 Myanmar Junta Soldiers and Police Join Civil Disobedience Movement

Sunday 5 September 2021, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 23 August 2021).

round 2,000 soldiers and police have joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) since the Myanmar military's February 1 coup, according to People's Embrace, a group helping security forces personnel who are refusing to work for the regime.

Most of the soldiers who have joined the CDM are privates and sergeants. Officers ranking from lieutenants to majors account for around 100.

"There are around 1,500 military personnel who have joined the CDM. There are over 2,000 including police," Captain Lin Htet Aung of People's Embrace told The Irrawaddy.

People's Embrace was formed by military personnel who have joined the CDM. In cooperation with the parallel National Unity Government (NUG), the group provides assistance to striking soldiers, as well as trying to persuade other military personnel to leave their barracks.

Captain Lin Htet Aung graduated from the 54th Intake of the Defence Services Academy. He joined the CDM in early April, while serving as a company commander in Battalion 528 in eastern Shan State.

The 2,000 soldiers who have joined the CDM amount to the size of four standard battalions in the Myanmar military, noted Captain Lin Htet Aung. The figure is based on the number of people who have contacted People's Embrace and those who have fled to areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations (EAO's), as well as from data provided by sources inside the regime.

Security forces personnel who have left the military to stand by the people have done so because they have become more aware of the true colors of the military regime, which has been using lethal violence against civilians.

Most of the striking soldiers and police have either fled to areas controlled by EAO's or are hiding among civilians and doing what they can to fight the regime.

"Some are providing military training to civilian resistance fighters. Some are fighting themselves. Some share information [with resistance fighters] if they can do nothing else due to security concerns," said the Captain.

Many soldiers joined the CDM in the third week of August, with more expected to join as the regime continues to use violence against the people, striking military officers said.

On August 19, a number of soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 25 in Dawei, Tanintharyi Region deserted with their weapons to join the CDM. The following day, a police sergeant from Yinmarbin

Township in Sagaing Region also deserted with his weapon.

People's Soldiers, a Facebook page run by striking military personnel, said 500 more soldiers are expected to join the CDM over the next month, on the condition that the NUG provides security and establishes a mechanism that enables the NUG to verify the identities of the soldiers wanting to join the CDM.

People's Embrace, in collaboration with the NUG's Defense Ministry, has already certified the first 100 military personnel to join the CDM and is in the process of certifying 100 more.

The Irrawaddy

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- The Irrawaddy 23 August 2021:

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