

GEN Z Leading the FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN MYANMAR

Briefing Paper

Myanmar - where is that?

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is in South East Asia. It has a population of about 54 million, most of whom are Burmese speakers, although other languages are also spoken. The biggest city is Yangon (Rangoon), but the capital is Nay Pyi Taw. While there is no official state religion in Myanmar, the dominant religion is Buddhism which is 89.8%, Christians are 6.3% with 2.3% Muslims and 0.5% Hinduism.



Myanmar was ruled by the armed forces from 1962 until 2011, when a new government began ushering in a return to civilian rule.

What has happened now, and why?

The military is now back in charge and has declared a year-long state of emergency. It seized control on 1 February, following a general election which Ms. Suu Kyi's NLD party won by a landslide. The armed forces had backed the opposition, who were demanding a rerun of the vote, claiming widespread fraud.

The election commission said there was no evidence to support these claims. The coup took place as a new session of parliament was set to open.

Ms. Suu Kyi, is under house arrest and has [appeared in court via video-link](#), charged with possessing illegal walkie-talkies, theft and violating Covid-19 restrictions during last year's election campaign and publishing information that may "cause fear or alarm". Many other NLD govt officials have also been detained. Many have fled and are in hiding.

Who is in charge now?

Military commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing has taken power. He has long wielded significant political influence, successfully maintaining the power of the Tatmadaw - Myanmar's military - even as the country moved towards democracy.

He has received international condemnation and sanctions for his alleged role in the military's attacks on ethnic minorities. In his first public comments after the coup, Gen Hlaing sought to justify the takeover. He said the military was on the side of the people and would form a "true and disciplined democracy". The military says it will hold a "free and fair" election once the state of emergency is over.





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How have people and Gen Z reacted?

The protests over the coup have been the largest since the so-called Saffron Revolution in 2007, when thousands of monks rose up against the military regime.

Protesters include those in the health sector – doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, students, bank officers train drivers and government workers. A civil disobedience movement has been birthed called the CDM that has refused to take up any work or participate in civil life bring the country to a halt in protest against the new junta.

The significance of the protest is that the majority of them are young people in their teens and twenties, and the average age of casualties is 17yrs! These young protesters who have taken to the streets, and have not backed down even as violence escalates.

Everyday different very creative forms of protests have been launched in Myanmar. Using social media, memes, tweets, insta, street art has been among the forms of protest as well as other visible means of very creative protest –dropping onions and picking them up in the middle of the street, faking broken cars on streets with open hoods, slow driving, shoelace tying in streets, strewing newspapers and picking up, crossing and recrossing street, causing traffic snarls in the early days, to banging pots and pans at night, singing on street corners, hanging women’s sarongs and underwear in public (a bad omen), wearing outfits from marvel to kimonos, to drag queens to beauty queens, the protestors included from body builders to wedding couples and walking pets to sitting in kiddie pools!

These young people – many of whom grew up listening to their parents talk about the 1988 protests and the subsequent military crackdown – are politically minded and globally connected. They are switched on to social media.

The key symbol of the protest includes a sign of defiance the three-finger salute with references to popular culture, and the symbol of protest against oppression of *The Hunger Games*.

How has all that been received by the military?

The military has imposed restrictions, including curfews and limits to gatherings. In addition, for the past several weeks internet access has been made available only intermittently.

Security forces have used water cannon, rubber bullets, tear gas, and live ammunition and violent attacks regardless of who it is, to try to disperse protesters. It is also reported that the security forces had opened fire on crowds with at least 38 protesters killed and scores more injured. It is said that more than 50 had died since the military coup last month.

The efforts to control the protests have become more violent and arbitrary; arrests, physical beatings, shooting, break-ins to homes, crackdown on activist leaders causing them to flee are all common place and the atrocities are increasingly violent.

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Since the new military regime seized power on February 1, it has arrested hundreds of opposition activists, abolished the democratically elected parliament, and enacted a slew of new repressive laws.

We are also hearing of certain sections of the military and police that are joining in protest or deserting the forces claiming they do not want to fight against their own people.

So, what can we do about it?

We believe that oppression and violation of human rights anywhere is a violation everywhere! As young people we want to stand against the violation of the freedom of expression of young people, of the squashing of the dreams of young people, and stand with the young people of Myanmar in two ways.

1. Help bring awareness to others in the region
 - a. Star your own campaigns
2. Show your Solidarity:
 - three fingered salute
 - post on fb / twitter / instagram / talking about it your circles
3. Keep sharing the campaign images as widely as possible across as many platforms and networks
 - You can be as creative as the Myanmar youth
 - You can be active both on social media and out on the street
 - You can use whatever means to create awareness. Use any form of art and expression you are comfortable with (e.g. Youth in Myanmar have dressed up like Marvel characters, sat in plastic pools and tents outside, painted on the roads, walls and they even sing all night banging on pots and other metal stuff. Flash mob dance acts or street drama, art, poetry, anything to show solidarity).
 - Social media is not the only way to go about it.

<https://observers.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20210224-myanmar-protests-creative-civil-disobedience>

<https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/costumes-art-pools-myanmar-protesters-bring-creativity-in-anti-military-protests.html>

<https://nationalpost.com/news/world/sarong-revolution-grows-in-myanmar-as-women-hang-skirts-to-keep-superstitious-soldiers-at-bay>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/11/myanmars-protesters-look-to-future-not-past-as-they-battle-coup>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>

<https://www.news.com.au/world/asia/myanmar-coup-australia-suspends-military-ties-as-death-toll-rises/news-story/34e823d114a4797d46c0e7661d5dc46f>

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What happened to Angel?

On Thursday in Mandalay, people lined the route of Angel's funeral procession. Mourners sang revolutionary songs and chanted anti-coup slogans, Reuters news agency reports.

Images of the teenager wearing her "Everything will be OK" T-shirt at the protests had gone viral.

Aware of the dangers of taking part in the protests, she had written her blood type details on Facebook and requested that her organs be donated in the event of her death.



Myat Thu, who was with her at the protest on Wednesday, said she had kicked open a water pipe so protesters could wash tear gas from their eyes. She had also tried to help him as police opened fire.

"She told me 'Sit! Bullets will hit you'," he told Reuters. "She cared for and protected others." He said police hit them with tear gas and then the bullets came.

Myat Thu said Angel, who had proudly voted in elections for the first time last year, was a "happy girl". "She loved her family and her family loved her so much too," he said. "We are not in a war. There is no reason to use live bullets on people."

Link to story - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56277165>

In an attempt to cover up Angel's death the Myanmar police dug up Angel's body to perform what they claimed was an autopsy required to investigate the cause of her death.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/12/asia/myanmar-protester-angel-democracy-martyr-intl-hnk/index.html>



Khant Nyar Hein - A Future Doctor that never survived

They are shooting at our kids' heads': in Myanmar, a dead 17-year-old's family mourns the loss of Khant Nyar Hein, a first-year medical student from an ethnic Chinese family, was shot dead by security forces at a protest on Sunday part in a demonstration against the military coup.

Members of the medical community hold up the three finger salute at the funeral of Khant Nyar Hein at in Yangon on Tuesday, after the first year medical student was shot dead during a crackdown by security forces.

Link to story - <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3126214/its-not-about-one-family-any-more-myanmar-family-slain-17-year>



Khin Myo Chit is the youngest person to be killed by security forces since the coup. "They came into the house, they broke the doors and they were shooting inside," said her father, U Maung Ko Hashin Bai. "The child was really scared and she was shouting and they were saying 'this not is scary' and then they started shooting again.

"They were beating up her brother. Then they asked her as she was running towards me 'are you the one who is scared?'- and then they shot her."

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Link to story - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56501871>

Situation Update – 17th March 2021

- Price hikes of up to 35 percent in food and fuel since the coup make it harder for the poor to feed themselves, the UN's World Food Programme says.
- Security forces use live rounds and machine-gun fire, indiscriminately launching brutal attacks. Front-line medics, children, bystanders – no one, it seems, is safe.
- As the death toll rises, it's astounding to see the resilience and creativity of those joining the protests, and the bravery of the local journalists covering it.
- Crackdown on media as many have been arrested and not heard of since and others are at safe houses.



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- Aung San Suu Kyi faces at least four charges, including the illegal use of walkie-talkie radios and infringing protocols related to the coronavirus pandemic. A court appearance on Monday(15th) was delayed because of internet issues, according to her lawyer.
- Myanmar has been subject to an internet blackout every night for the past 45 nights. In recent days the military has also begun restricting mobile internet services during the day.
- Martial law imposed in Myanmar as protester death toll rises.
- A human rights group says at least 250 people have been killed in Myanmar since the recent military coup in the country.
- The AAPP said some 2,175 people had been arrested, charged or sentenced since the military seized power and 1,856 remain in custody.

Prayer Request for Myanmar

- Pray for divine intervention, wisdom and discernment for national and international leaders; that God would restore peace, law and order in Myanmar and that the suffering would end.
- Pray that the people of Myanmar will experience the peace of the Lord as they navigate through these uncertainties.
- Pray for boldness and resilience for the people of Myanmar as they continue to uphold and fight for democracy.
- Students and your people who are often at the forefront of political protests, so please hold them in your hearts.
- Pray for those who have been detained, harassed and tortured. Innocent civilians who have got caught in the crossfire and lost lives, loved ones.
- As the crackdowns continue pray for media and journalists on the ground; for their safety and their work to continue as they share news of what's happening on the ground despite the severe broadcast and telecommunications restrictions.
- Pray for the situation with COVID19 that seems to have been forgotten with lack of medical care.
- Pray for the people as they suffer from lack of provisions and hunger due to the economic crisis. Lack of means to transfer funds to the country has made it harder for donors to support those on the ground.
- Pray for healing and hope to spread amongst the people of Myanmar and not to get discouraged but to believe more and more that through the darkness His light will shine.

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