

Burma

Myanmar Student Unions Call on China Not to Recognize Military Regime

Sunday 14 February 2021, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 12 February 2021).

YANGON—Student unions from 18 universities in Myanmar urged Chinese President Xi Jinping not to recognize Myanmar’s military regime and to stand with the people of the country, amid a wave of anti-China sentiment—including boycotts on Chinese products—led by young people across the country following the military takeover.

An increasingly large crowd of anti-coup protesters have gathered daily in front of the Chinese Embassy [1] in Yangon throughout this week, demanding that Beijing end its support for the military regime and stand with the tens of thousands of protesters in the country in their demand for a restoration of civilian rule.

The student unions said that if the Chinese government wants to act as a good neighbor, it must make clear that it does not recognize the military regime, which they said had unjustly detained the leaders of the legitimate government elected by the people of Myanmar.

They warned that supporting the Myanmar military (or Tatmadaw) would do “serious damage” to the reputation of China.

China has been the Myanmar military’s closest ally for a long time and is a major supplier of military aid and cooperation. So far, Beijing has refrained from criticizing the coup; recently, it refused to condemn the military at the United Nations Security Council. Western nations, meanwhile, have strongly condemned the military for seizing power and detaining national civilian leader Myanmar State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.



Thousands of protesters gather in front of the Chinese Embassy in Yangon, the commercial capital of Myanmar, for a third day on Friday. / The Irrawaddy

The unions urged that China not cooperate with the military, as a sign that it respects the Myanmar people’s will.

Anti-Chinese sentiment has spread rapidly following Beijing’s failure to denounce the takeover, which at one point it described as a “major cabinet reshuffle”. As a result, social media campaigns against “made in China” products and Chinese brands have circulated widely among users of Facebook and Twitter in Myanmar.

In the latest social media campaigns against China, thousands of social media users on Facebook and Twitter have joined a boycott of Huawei products, accusing the company of helping the military to install IT systems to limit digital rights in the country.

Thousands of social media users on Facebook and Twitter posted the message “Huawei is an enemy of the Democracy and Freedom of expression,” urging people to stop using its products. Huawei has not responded to the accusations so far.



An anti-coup protester stands in front of the Chinese Embassy in Yangon, the commercial capital of Myanmar, on Friday. / The Irrawaddy

Rumors have also swirled that China is helping the military to build an internet firewall to limit the freedom of speech and access to information in Myanmar by blocking social media, popular search engines including Google, and virtual private networks (VPNs).

A facility that forms part of the China-Myanmar twin oil-and-gas pipeline in Thaungtha Township in Mandalay was heavily guarded by local police on Friday morning after nearly 2,000 social media users shared a status notice threatening to destroy a segment of the pipeline if the military regime cut internet access again.

On Wednesday, the Chinese Embassy denied the reports that China had dispatched IT technicians to Myanmar help the Tatmadaw build a firewall.

The Irrawaddy

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- The Irrawaddy 12 February 2021:
<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-student-unions-call-china-not-recognize-military-regime.html>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/china-denies-helping-myanmar-military-regime-build-internet-firewall.html>