

Burma: Ten Journalists Detained for Protest Coverage

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Yangon – At least 25 journalists have been detained during the police crackdown against the anti-regime demonstrations across Myanmar between Feb. 14 to March 1 with 10 journalists are still in detention.

They were covering anti-coup demonstrations in Yangon, Myitkyina, Monywa, Hakha, Magwe, Patheingyi, Pyaw, Mawlamyine and other cities.

Twelve were released without facing charges and two were released on bail after being charged under Article 505(a) of the Penal Code carrying up to two years' imprisonment after trying to get a comment from the security forces for a balanced story.

The other 10 journalists were being held without facing any charges on Monday.

The authorities have deliberately attacked media representatives with batons and slingshots during recent crackdowns.

On Monday, two reporters from the Monywa Gazette in Sagaing Region and the Chinland Post in Hakha, Chin State, were detained by the security forces.

The Gazette reporter was later released by the police.

On Sunday, the security forces arrested five journalists covering crackdowns in Yangon, Patheingyi, Myitkyina and Mawlamyine, according to their families and employers.

Of the five, a detained reporter from 74 Media in Myitkyina, Kachin State, was released on Sunday.

Ko Sharr Latt, the elder brother of detained freelance photojournalist Shin Moe Myint, 23, told The Irrawaddy that her whereabouts were unknown.

The photographer was arrested near Myaynigone junction in Sanchaung Township, Yangon, on Sunday morning while covering an anti-regime demonstration.

Ko Sharr Latt said the family had asked for her at Insein Prison.

On Saturday, the security forces arrested eight journalists, including a reporter from the international Associated Press. Three of the journalists from Magwe and Sagaing regions and Chin State were later released without facing charges.

Myanmar Now's reporter Ma Kay Zon Nway was arrested near Myaynigone junction on Saturday morning while she was live-streaming the demonstration.

She and the other four journalists have reportedly been detained in Insein since Saturday.

Ko Ahr Mahn, 7Day News chief editor, told The Irrawaddy on Monday that detaining journalists who were legally covering news events is unacceptable.

A 7Day journalist has been detained since Feb. 27. He was covering an anti-regime demonstration on Insein Road near Hledan junction.

"Journalists are now deliberately being arrested. This is unacceptable. Journalists are just performing their duties, not protesting," said Ko Ahr Mahn. "Providing accurate information on the ground is not a crime."

By Monday, about 1,132 people, including leaders and lawmakers from the National League for Democracy, political activists, artists, monks, writers, protesters, journalists and government staff involved in the civil disobedience movement, have been detained or face arrest warrants, according to the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners.

An estimated 833 people are still in detention or face arrest warrants.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ten-journalists-held-myanmars-regime-protest-coverage.html>

Myanmar Central Bank Limits ATM Transactions, Account Withdrawals

A Yangon resident withdraws cash from an ATM at a CB Bank branch in April 2019. / The Irrawaddy

YANGON—The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has lowered its limits on cash withdrawals from ATMs and bank accounts after a military-owned bank suspended operations last week as it faced a run on deposits.

Claiming the move is aimed at encouraging digital payments, the CBM's directive states that starting Monday, individuals can withdraw a maximum of 500,000 kyats (about US\$354) from ATMs per day. Until Feb. 28, ATM users were allowed to withdraw up to 1 million kyats per day.

Individuals can withdraw a maximum 2 million kyats per week from their bank accounts. For companies and organizations, the limit is 20 million kyats per week, the CBM said.

Private banks' services have been limited to ATMs and online banking since early February, as their employees have stopped working to join the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) against the military regime. Despite pressure on banks from the military regime to reopen, employees have staunchly refused to return to their offices.

Since the coup, unstable political conditions have caused rumors to swirl, including that some banks are on the verge of collapse. Since Feb. 8, people have lined up in front of ATMs every day to withdraw as much cash as they can. Private banks fill up all the ATMs in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, early every morning, but the cash usually runs out at around 10 or 11 a.m. Last week, private banks limited withdrawals to 1 million kyats per day.

"Banks might be concerned that they will face bank runs as soon as they reopen," a founder of an IT company based in Naypyitaw told The Irrawaddy.

"The withdrawal amount for a company per week is quite problematic. For the big companies, it could create a crisis," he said.

Currently, private banks are refusing to provide payroll services, and many companies across the country are now delaying payment of salaries to employees. Some companies are planning to pay staff in cash.

On Monday, the central bank asked private banks to reopen branches in border towns including Muse and Myawaddy, as they play a major role in border trade. It said traders have faced difficulties due to the suspension of bank services. Officials from private banks said their ability to reopen would depend whether staff involved in the CDM returned.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-central-bank-limits-atm-transactions-account-withdrawals.html>

Myanmar Regime Recalls Over 100 Staff From Foreign Missions

YANGON—Myanmar's military regime has recalled at least 100 staff from missions in at least 19 countries, according to leaked documents.

The move came after a speech by Myanmar's UN envoy U Kyaw Moe Tun to the General Assembly in New York on Friday in which he broke ranks with the military regime to condemn the coup and plead for the international community's help in restoring democracy to his country. Following the speech, the junta dismissed the envoy and accused him of "high treason" for insisting that he represented the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD).

According to the leaked documents, the military regime on Sunday ordered home officials including minister-counselors and secretaries, as well as other embassy staff, at missions in the US, the UK, Italy, Austria, Brazil, France, Norway, Belgium, Serbia, China, Japan, India, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Cambodia, South Korea and the Philippines.

Moreover, the documents include orders transferring more than 50 staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Naypyitaw to vacated positions in those countries.

A staffer at the Myanmar Embassy in the US told The Irrawaddy, "U Kyaw Moe Tun's action at the

UN sent a signal to MOFA staff in foreign countries that they should participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement [CDM] openly.”

Thousands of civil servants in Myanmar have joined the CDM, showing opposition to the military coup and refusing to work under the military-appointed cabinet.

The staffer said some employees of the mission in the US are reluctant to accept the coup, after having worked under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, adding that many dislike the idea of working under the military regime.

Detained Myanmar State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi served concurrently as the foreign minister after the NLD-led government took office in 2016.

Early last month, the military regime recalled Daw Kay Thi Soe, Myanmar’s first ambassador to the Czech Republic. She said she had been recalled for revealing which party she voted for in the Nov. 8 general election.

On Saturday, Daw Kyi Thi Soe wrote on Facebook that she condemned the unjust military takeover and added that as a mother, she shared the sadness of the mothers of those killed and injured during security forces’ crackdowns on protesters.

She said she would return to Myanmar in early March.

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<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-regime-recalls-100-staff-foreign-missions.html>
