

Thailand: Protests against Myanmar coup face police crackdown, a border town in panic

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Contents

- [Border town in stockpile \(...\)](#)
- [Activists, political parties](#)

Shortly after Thais and Myanmarese staged a protest against the coup by the Myanmar military this afternoon, they were dispersed by the Royal Thai Police with shields and batons. 3 people were arrested.

The 3 were taken to Yannawa Police Station: one is a member of the volunteer protest guard group We Volunteer, one a student from Thammasat University and the other an ordinary citizen.



Thai and Myanmar protesters in front of the Myanmar Embassy to Thailand

Kath Khangpiboon, a lecturer from Thammasat University, accompanied the arrested student in the police car to the police station and stayed there.

Another gathering took place at the Pathumwan Skywalk where 3 students distributed leaflets in opposition to the coup in Myanmar.



A gathering at the Skywalk.

In response to the coup and detention of Aung San Suu Kyi, the de-facto leader of the NLD-led administration, along with NLD politicians and candidates countrywide, some Myanmar citizens

gathered in front of the Myanmar Embassy to Thailand at around 15.00, many wearing red shirts and carrying NLD flags, banners or portraits of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Some also raised the 3-finger salute, an anti-dictatorship gesture used in Thai pro-democracy protests. We Volunteer also participated in the protest.

Political activists including Parit Chiwarak and Panussaya Sitthijirawattanakul and political figures including Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, Pannika Wanich and Amarat Chokepamitkul were also present.

At around 17.00, police with batons and shields arrived at the scene and swiftly dispersed the protesters. Loud, explosive-like sounds were reportedly heard and smoke flares were seen in the live footage from THE MATTER.

Border town in stockpile rush, peace process may be delayed

A source from Tachileik, a town in Shan State bordering Chiang Rai Province, said people there found out about the coup at dawn. Myanmar soldiers had been deployed along the border since 01.00. The 2nd Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge that is regularly open for trade was closed.

Airports and banks were reportedly closed. The internet and telecommunications were cut, although those using Thai internet services in the border town are still able to access the internet. People were seen stockpiling supplies in panic.

BBC Myanmar reported that ATM machines were not functioning.

Khuensai Jaiyen, founder of the Shan Herald Agency for News, a Chiang Mai-based news agency reporting on Shan State news, and Director of the Pyidaungsu Institute, a research centre supporting the Myanmar peace process, said the military seizure of power was made under Section 417 of the Myanmar constitution which allows the military to take control of the administration after declaring a state of emergency.

Khuensai said that in the eyes of the military, their action was not considered a coup as the constitution still remains intact, but the international community will see it as a coup, which will inform their attitude toward the military's decision.

Khuensai has participated in the peace process steering committee and believes that the process will be delayed. The military is likely to prioritize quelling the conflicts in the townships first, with the border and ethnic issues to be addressed later.

Activists, political parties in Thailand opposing the coup

In Chiang Mai in the north where many Myanmar people live and work, activists staged a demonstration at the Rin Kham intersection. They demanded that ASEAN member countries boycott the military government and also called for the unconditional release of those detained in Myanmar after the coup.

The pro-democracy protest group Ratsadon (the people) also published a statement denouncing the overthrow of democracy and violation of people's rights. They demanded that ASEAN member countries uphold the ASEAN Charter, that defines its regional pact by expressing protection for

democracy and human rights.

Before the election victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 2015, Chiang Mai was where many Myanmar civil organizations and media took refuge and established a base. Many returned to Myanmar after the NLD victory. It is not known whether their return is possible due to the current Thai-Myanmar border shutdown.

Thai opposition parties like Pheu Thai and Move Forward Party also released statements denouncing the coup for violating the people's rights, liberties and political will expressed by their votes. They also demanded the immediate unconditional release of those detained.

No government party including Palang Pracharat has yet expressed any opinion regarding the coup in Myanmar.

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P.S.

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