

Burma

Resistances - Nation of Ghost Towns Defies Myanmar Junta With ‘Silent Strike’

Wednesday 24 March 2021, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 24 March 2021).

Myanmar was a nation of ghost towns Wednesday as opponents of the military regime collectively shamed the junta’s recent claims of “normalcy” in the country by staying home and shutting down their businesses in city after city.

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People across the country were on “Silent Strike” as part of their ongoing opposition against the military regime that grabbed power from Myanmar’s democratically elected government on Feb. 1 by staging a coup.

Since mid-February, major cities across the country have been reeling from chaos caused by violence and deadly crackdowns by soldiers and police on anti-regime protesters. Shops and markets have cut their business hours short due to frequent and fatal confrontations between security forces and protesters on the streets. Many closed their businesses entirely out of fear. Roads that used to be crowded with traffic are now blocked by barricades set up by protesters to deter the advancement of troops.

Beginning last week, the regime launched a serious effort to reopen businesses by force and clear roadblocks with the occasional use of forced labor, grabbing anyone they saw on the road or from their homes.

Then they trumpeted on state-owned and military-controlled media that “markets and malls at some townships in Yangon (Myanmar’s business hub) have reopened as situations returned to normalcy.”

In response to the regime’s claim of normalcy, people campaigned online to launch a one-day silent strike partly to prove that the claim was wrong and also to demonstrate another form of defiance against the junta.

On Wednesday, roads in major cities like Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyitaw, Monywa and others were mostly deserted.



A nearly empty road in Yangon as the people of Myanmar observed "Silent Strike" against the regime on Wednesday. /The Irrawaddy

Major businesses like the country's biggest retail malls like City Mart, Ocean announced they were closed. Taxi and delivery service Grab suspended its service. Local wet markets turned dry as they only opened a few hours in the morning to let people buy necessities. Even corner stores like ABC and City Express were closed. Wholesale markets were no exception. Even protesters took a day off.

With a handful of cars on the road and few people out to shop for necessities, downtown Yangon on Wednesday was reminiscent of the COVID lockdown period that the city underwent nearly one year ago. On some shady roads of the city, stray dogs napped safely under the hot mid-day sun as there was no vehicle traffic to interrupt their freedom.

Myanmar second biggest city, Mandalay, totally plunged into silence after 8 a.m. Wednesday. The city's busiest area near Zay Cho market was totally deserted, according to witnesses. Buddhist monks who normally went around the city in the morning to receive food and other offerings broke their ritual on Wednesday.

"I have never experienced that kind of silence in my life, not even during the COVID," said U Kyaw Thiha, a city resident.

The 40-year-old added that the strike on Wednesday was a testament of the people's unity when it came to saying no to the junta.

"We have no leader telling us what to do. People just join together out of their conscience to oppose the dictatorship," he said.

The Irrawaddy

- The Irrawaddy. 24 March 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/nation-ghost-towns-defies-myanmar-junta-silent-strike.html>

Myanmar Energy and Electricity Staff Pressured to End Strike

Naypyitaw — Striking Ministry of Electricity and Energy staff in Naypyitaw say they are being pressured to return to work.

Around 150 striking Electric Power Generation Enterprise (EPGE) staff said they had received phone calls threatening suspension and prosecution if they fail to return to work. They said they were also told to leave their government accommodation.

However, staff remain in their quarters because the ministry has issued no official notice on their case.

“If they dismiss us and ask us to leave the staff quarters with an official letter, we will leave. But that still would not comply with rules for civil servants,” said a ministry employee.

Most of those on strike are junior staff and the phone threats were made by managers who chose to work for the military regime, said a striking EPGE employee.

“Some ministries have issued official notices but we have received no notifications, only threats from senior officials,” said the employee.

Most of the ministry’s projects have stalled because of the civil disobedience movement against the regime which started in early February.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications, Myanma Railways and other government departments have dismissed hundreds of striking staff and are evicting them from their accommodation.

Government employees went on strike against the military in 1988, after which many were dismissed, demoted or transferred to remote areas.

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- The Irrawaddy. 24 March 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-energy-electricity-staff-pressured-end-strike.html>

Food for Myanmar Regime Soldiers Taken Away After Karen Rebels Block Delivery

Rice and oil bound for Myanmar soldiers was taken back by Thailand on Tuesday at midnight. / The Irrawaddy

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By The Irrawaddy 24 March 2021

Food reportedly bought from Thailand and bound for Tatmadaw (Myanmar’s military) troops in Karen State was taken away on Tuesday at midnight, after ethnic armed organization the Karen National Union (KNU) blocked its delivery.

Many in Myanmar believe that the food was sold by the Thai army to the Tatmadaw, prompting people to condemn the Thai military on social media after the food arrived on the banks of the Salween River on Saturday.

Following fresh clashes with the Tatmadaw in Karen State’s Papun District, the KNU’s Brigade 5 blocked transportation routes to Papun, preventing the military regime from delivering food to its troops based there.

On Saturday, 700 sacks of rice, oil and canned meat which are said to have been bought from Thailand, were unloaded on the Thai side of the Salween River opposite Karen State.

But the food was stranded there as the KNU refused to allow the food to be delivered to the Tatmadaw soldiers in Papun.

“Around five people came in four vehicles on Tuesday around midnight and took the supplies. Perhaps it is because the KNU Brigade 5 has said they would not take responsibility for what happens if the food is delivered across the river to Karen State,” said local resident U Saw Lu, who witnessed the scene.

There are a number of Myanmar military outposts along the Salween River, which marks the Myanmar-Thai border in Karen State. Local residents suggested that the food would be delivered to the Tatmadaw at another place along the frontier.

The KNU said it blocked the food delivery because 500 local Karen people are currently affected by ongoing armed conflicts in Papun District, and also because it does not support the military regime and cannot accept the junta killing innocent people across the country.

KNU Brigade 5 issued a warning in both the Burmese and Thai languages saying that it would not tolerate anyone who carries food for the military regime’s soldiers.

On Saturday, according to Reuters, Maj Gen Amnat Srimak, commander of the Naresuan Task Force of the Thai Army, said in a statement, “The Thai army is not supplying the Myanmar army and there has been no contact from the Myanmar army requesting help or demanding any assistance from us because they have their own honour.”

“If there is anything, I think it is just regular commerce at normal border crossings,” he said. “We are not blocking this if the commerce is not against the law and follows customs procedures.”

Locals who went to see the food supplies on Tuesday at noon were fired on by a nearby Tatmadaw outpost. Six warning shots were fired, according to local residents. The food was then collected late at night.

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- The Irrawaddy. 23 March 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/food-myanmar-regime-soldiers-taken-away-karen-rebels-block-delivery.html>

Myanmar Junta Fires Striking Ministry of Foreign Affairs Staff

Myanmar’s military regime has dismissed a total of 56 staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) who have gone on strike in protest against military rule and the junta’s Feb.1 coup.

The regime’s foreign affairs ministry notified the civil servants of their dismissal last week, claiming that they had breached the civil service code of conduct, according to leaked documents. The staff fired range from assistant directors to clerks who are refusing to work for the regime’s cabinet.

Thousands of civil servants across the country have joined the civil disobedience movement (CDM) in protest at the junta's overthrowing of the democratically-elected civilian government.

On Monday Myanmar coup leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing urged civil servants to return to work saying that despite their different opinions, they need to serve dutifully no matter what government takes office.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said that civil servants must follow civil service rules and codes of conduct.

He warned that civil servants will have to sign confessions the first time they fail to go to work. For any subsequent violations, action will be taken against them in accordance with civil service rules.

Other MOFA staff, including over two dozen Myanmar diplomats in foreign missions, have been on strike since early March in protest at the security forces increasingly lethal crackdown on peaceful anti-regime protesters.

The junta has also recalled at least 100 staff from overseas missions in at least 19 countries, including the US and UK, after Myanmar's United Nations (UN) envoy U Kyaw Moe Tun broke ranks with the regime to condemn their coup in front of the UN General Assembly in New York and pleaded for the international community's help in restoring democracy to Myanmar.

In late February, nine MOFA staff in Myanmar's capital Naypyitaw were arrested and charged for refusing to work for the military regime.

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- The Irrawaddy. 23 March 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-fires-striking-ministry-foreign-affairs-staff.html>
