

Some 90 percent of Myanmar students refuse to attend school under coup regime, teachers say

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More than half of all teachers are on strike and just 10 percent of students have signed up to start the school year, according to the Myanmar Teachers' Federation

Two days into the school registration process, some 90 percent of students have refused to enroll in Myanmar's education system under the coup regime, members of the Myanmar Teachers' Federation (MTF) have said.

Although the military council opened registration on Monday, only 10 percent of students nationwide have enrolled in their respective schools, according to MTF.

Myanmar had more than 9 million students enrolled in its basic education system during the 2019-2020 school year, according to the Ministry of Education under the ousted National League for Democracy government

Current figures suggest that less than 1 million are re-joining their schools this year when they open on June 1.

Locals nationwide have protested the reopening of schools—the sites of occupation by junta troops and battles with local resistance—spray painting anti-coup messages on gates and buildings. Parents have declared that they do not want their children indoctrinated into a “military slave education.”

Likely in response to this protest movement, some 30 policemen and regime troops have been standing guard outside the only high school in Kyike Htaw village in Yangon's Kawhmu Township during the registration process. They have also been escorting teachers to the school, according to a local resident who requested anonymity.

In the afternoon, the local said, military-appointed ward administrators and members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party took over the duties from the police and soldiers.

Just 12 students enrolled at the high school in two days, according to sources close to the school.

In the cities of Mandalay, Monywa, and Yangon there are schools that have had no students register to attend, MTF reported.

Yet junta-run newspapers have recently published photos of crowds of people taking part in the registration process. Netizens have cried foul, pointing out that the pictures were taken prior to the 2019 school year and not indicative of the current level of participation. Myanmar Now has been unable to independently verify these claims.

‘They are trying to threaten us’

A teacher and MTF member who is on strike in accordance with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), told Myanmar Now that this was not an appropriate time for students to return to school.

“If schools open now, we won’t be able to teach anything meaningfully. Children won’t feel safe. Education isn’t just about teaching information—it is about cultivating humanity. This needs to happen in an environment that is warm and secure,” the teacher said.

More than half of the 400,000 teachers in Myanmar’s education system are estimated to be participating in the CDM. With more than 130,000 of the striking teachers formally suspended by the regime, the military authorities have been advertising open teaching positions in junta-controlled newspapers as the school opening date nears.

“Even before the coup, there weren’t enough teachers to meet the needs of the number of students that they had. Suspending the teachers and bringing charges against them will create even bigger operational challenges for the regime itself,” the same teacher told Myanmar Now.

More than 100 striking teachers have been charged with incitement for violating Section 505a of the Penal Code, an MTF member said. Conviction carries a three-year prison sentence.

Soe Thura Kyaw, a teacher from Yangon’s Taikkyi Township, is among those charged under 505a for leading a protest in Yangon and joining the CDM. He told Myanmar Now that the junta has offered to drop the charge against him if he returns to work.

“They are afraid of the resistance. They are trying to threaten us into teaching again,” Soe Thura Kyaw, who is also a member of the protest committee for education staff, said.

He added that he is committed to the strike, and bringing down the military dictatorship.

A 28-year-old man in Yangon Region’s Kyike Htaw village said his younger brother, who was due to start fifth grade, would not be going to school this year.

The family is waiting for the anti-coup National Unity Government (NUG) to release its [interim education program](#). At the time of reporting, the NUG had publicly stated plans to teach online, but further details were not yet known. “We don’t accept the military dictatorship, and we reject their education,” the Kyike Htaw local said. “We will send our brother back to school once the people have won.”

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