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Three arrested over anti-junta 'silent strike' in Mandalay

The arrests came alongside a spate of bombings in the commercial capital Yangon.

By RFA Burmese

Authorities in Myanmar's second city Mandalay have arrested at least three people for taking part in a "silent strike" protesting the third anniversary of military rule, according to residents.

People in Myanmar staged [a nationwide silent strike](#) on Thursday, forgoing work and staying inside their homes to demonstrate their opposition to the Feb. 1, 2021, coup d'état that saw the military seize control of the country.

The protest was held from 10 am to 4 pm in several major cities, including the commercial capital Yangon, and marked by noticeably reduced vehicle and foot traffic, while security appeared heightened, following the deployment of additional junta troops and security vehicles.

Sources told RFA Burmese that authorities in Mandalay arrested Kyaw Soe Oo, a 48-year-old English teacher, and two as-of-yet unidentified people who joined the silent strike or posted messages in support of the protest.

A source close to Kyaw Soe Oo's family, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to security concerns, said he knew something was wrong when the teacher failed to show up at either his 4 pm or 8 pm classes on Thursday.

"I only found out about his arrest when his students called me," the source said, adding that Kyaw Soe Oo's phone was turned off when he later tried to contact him. "He is just a tuition teacher, who is also a

member of the board of trustees for the Ein Daw Yar pagoda. He was never actively involved in politics.”

After learning of his arrest, Kyaw Soe Oo’s family members went to the No. 6 Police Station in Mandalay’s Chan Aye Thar Zan township to see him, but were told that he was not there, according to the source.

Arrested for FB posts

Ahead of Thursday’s protest, Kyaw Soe Oo posted a message on his Facebook account urging people to stay at home after 10 am. Pro-junta channels on the social media platform Telegram claimed that he was arrested for his posts.

Other reports on pro-junta Telegram channels claimed that a 25-year-old man and a woman from Mandalay were also arrested on Thursday. The woman had allegedly taken part in silent strike activities on Mandalay’s U Pein Bridge, but no other details were provided.

An official from the group that organized the strike in Mandalay, known as the Mandalay Strike Force, told RFA that the arrested woman “was not one of our members.”

Sources in Mandalay suggested that the number of arrests related to the strike could be higher, as “nearly everyone” took part.

Most of the shops at the city’s normally bustling Maha Aung Myay wholesale gem market were closed on Thursday, prompting municipal officers and the police to investigate and force owners to open, residents said.

There were similar reports of authorities forcing shops to open on Thursday in Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy regions, as well as forced attendance at pro-junta rallies.

Yangon blasts

Meanwhile, residents of Yangon reported that anti-junta groups detonated at least six bombs in three townships of Yangon on Wednesday and Thursday in a bid to undermine military rule on the third anniversary of the coup.

On Wednesday night, three explosions occurred at the North Okkalapa Township Electricity Office near a roundabout where junta security personnel were stationed, sources in the city told RFA.

Another two explosions took place at a sawmill in Kyimyinedine township’s Thardukan West ward on the same day, they said.

The last explosion occurred on Thursday near a traffic checkpoint where police were inspecting cars at the corner of 5th Street Hlaing River in Hlaingtharyar township, sources said.

A member of the anti-junta organization Operation Flame said the attacks were jointly carried out by rebel groups that included Company 2 of the People's Defense Force in North Okkalapa, the Kyimyinedine Township Operation Flame, the People's Defense Organization of Yangon's West District and the Yangon Army.

"We conducted the missions to mark the three-year anniversary of the military coup on behalf of all revolutionary forces, in response to junta oppression," the Operation Flame member said. "We will continue to fight together with the people until the junta is removed from power."

Reports indicated that four soldiers on security duty were seriously injured in the explosions in North Okkalapa and Kyimyindine townships. However, RFA was unable to independently verify the claims.

The junta did not release any statements related to the bombings and attempts by RFA to contact Htay Aung, the junta's attorney general and spokesperson for the Yangon region government, went unanswered Friday.

Residents told RFA that the junta has tightened security by deploying soldier and vehicle convoys in Yangon in response to the blasts.

Translated by Aung Naing. Edited by Joshua Lipes and Malcolm Foster.

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Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße	Contact
Austrian Centre for	32, 1041 Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
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Asylum Research and	F +43 1 589 00 589	Data Protection Notice
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