



# MYANMAR'S CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

A HISTORIC ENDEAVOUR FOR  
PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT  
OF MYANMAR

September 2021

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most importantly, on behalf of the tens of millions of Myanmar people who want a better future that is democratic, peaceful and prosperous, a sincere debt of gratitude is owed to all who have participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). The people mourn for the lost lives and for those unjustly imprisoned. Condolences are offered to the families who have lost loved ones. Hundreds of thousands of civil service personnel have lost their livelihoods and pensions because they believe in standing with the people over defending military dictators. Their courage, dedication and sacrifice for the cause of peace and democracy in Myanmar is inspiring. The entire country owes them eternal appreciation. The authors would like to thank all of those who contributed to the report through interviews, sharing data and providing feedback.

## DISCLAIMERS

This is not a legal document but instead an official Brief from the National Unity Government of Myanmar. It is intended to help the international community better understand a critical effort by the Myanmar people to overcome brutal military dictatorship and oppression through peaceful resistance. The facts and figures presented in this report are not yet conclusive given the fluidity of events still unfolding within Myanmar. Moreover, securing precise information is also difficult given the junta's violent repression of the democratic opposition's efforts, including to collect and share data. Further research will be needed to provide a more detailed accounting of Myanmar's Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) but this report will highlight the courage and determination of normal citizens across the country to resist dictatorship.

## ACRONYMS

<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>CDM</b>	Civil Disobedience Movement
<b>CRPH</b>	Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
<b>NUG</b>	National Unity Government
<b>SAC</b>	State Administration Council

# PREFACE

This Brief provides an overview of Myanmar's Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). It demonstrates the Myanmar people's resolve, as manifested through CDM, to never accept a return to military dictatorship. CDM is led by civil service personnel, with strong participation by both the general public and the private sector. This demonstrates the rejection of the junta across Myanmar society, including across ethnic and religious lines.

With the population near universally against a return to military dictatorship, there is wide support for the National Unity Government (NUG) as the representative of the Myanmar people. The NUG is an interim government composed of ministers and deputy-ministers chosen through a consultative process. Preceding it, and still acting as the legislative body for the NUG, is the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH). This body is composed of Members of Parliament who won the legitimate elections in November 2020 and senior leaders chosen through a consensual process with a wide range of other national stakeholders. The NUG is the only viable way for Myanmar to return to a path of democratization, peace, and economic growth. A government with popular support is also crucial for Myanmar to return to a place of dignity within the ASEAN region and across the wider international community.

Myanmar should not be labelled a "failed state." Rather, the events of 1 February 2021 should be understood as a failed coup by the military, which unlawfully seized power from an elected government. The Tatmadaw has neither consolidated control over the country or the state apparatus, nor has it been recognized internationally. In rejecting the coup, tens of millions of Myanmar's citizens, together with hundreds-of-thousands of civil service personnel, have participated in CDM. In doing so, they demonstrate their support of the NUG and the path it offers towards federal democracy and peace. In fact, despite socio-economic and security challenges placed on them by the junta, 312,627 CDM civil service personnel have joined to work under the NUG.

Despite Myanmar's people protesting the coup and dictatorship peacefully, as is their basic human right, the junta has responded time and

again through sheer barbarity. The same military that has been widely accused by the international community of committing genocide against the Rohingya has now turned their weapons against the entire population. They have massacred peaceful protesters all over the country, shot teenagers in the head with sniper rifles, left wounded protesters in the street as bait to attack ambulance crews, regularly tortured prisoners to death, blocked access to medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic, and generally acted with a level of savagery rarely seen in modern times. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, 998 civilians were killed by the military junta and 5,711 were arrested until August 16th, 2021.<sup>1</sup>

Myanmar's junta is an abomination for all of humanity. The international community must ensure that the people of Myanmar are protected from such violence and are rightfully represented by a government that they accept. That government is the NUG, which by design is only an interim one until the junta can be ousted and a new government duly elected. Myanmar's people want peace and equity, good governance, and economic growth. They seek a path towards democratic federalism. The international community should support them in this righteous endeavour.



**Mahn Winn Khaing Thann**  
**Prime Minister**  
**National Unity Government**

<sup>1</sup> Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)

# AN INTRODUCTION TO MYANMAR'S CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

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On 8 November 2020, Myanmar held a third round of national elections since the start of an extended reform process instigated by the 2008 Constitution and national elections in 2010 and 2015. This reform process was premised on the country transitioning away from military dictatorship and civil war and towards peace and federalism. During the November 2020 elections, the military-backed political party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), lost decisively to the National League for Democracy (NLD), which is led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Subsequently, the USDP and the military started to make false claims of widespread electoral fraud. Both domestic and international election monitors had deemed the poll fair and credible.

Myanmar's military, known as the Tatmadaw, launched a coup d'état on 1 February 2021, removing the elected NLD government led by State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint. The Tatmadaw's commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing took power, forming a dictatorial body of the "State Administration Council" (SAC), composed largely of generals. The Tatmadaw also announced a "one-year-long state of emergency" and that multi-party elections would be held at the end of this year. This period was subsequently extended by SAC in July. The generals announced, unsurprisingly, that elections would not be held within one year of the coup but instead would not be held until at least August 2023. Despite their own unconstitutional actions in the form of a coup, the Tatmadaw cynically contends that the 2008 Constitution is still sacrosanct.

Opposition to the Tatmadaw's unconstitutional and

coercive action was quick and nation-wide. Peaceful protests spread across the entire country demanding the release of all political prisoners and the return of the elected government.

The Tatmadaw's claims of electoral fraud were met with widespread contempt from the Myanmar people because of the military's distinctly toxic history of launching coups and denying or corrupting elections. As peaceful protests were expanding across the country in early February, a novel movement also began to emerge. This movement intended to demonstrate both moral and ethical repulsion at the actions of the coup leaders but also to begin applying peaceful pressure on the military regime to relinquish power.

The first incident of what would quickly grow into a national movement occurred on 2nd February. Medical doctors and other healthcare workers at the Mandalay General Hospital, all civil servants, posted social media statements that they would not work for an illegal military regime. As Naypyidaw surgeon Zwe Min Aung recounted to the Voice of America, "At the time, we really disagreed [with] this [the military coup], and we created [a] small group in Mandalay hospital and other hospitals, too. We distributed the statement on February 2 from Facebook and the nationwide CDM began."<sup>2</sup> Though CDM began as an online campaign but has expanded into a wider pro-democracy movement as civil servants from across the ministries started to boycott the military regime. As the movement gained momentum, ever wider parts of Myanmar society joined to make their opposition to the junta known.

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<sup>2</sup> How Myanmar's Civil Disobedience Movement is Pushing Back Against the Coup, Tommy Walker, <https://www.voanews.com/east->

[asia-pacific/how-myanmars-civil-disobedience-movement-pushing-back-against-coup](https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/how-myanmars-civil-disobedience-movement-pushing-back-against-coup)

# CDM IN MYANMAR



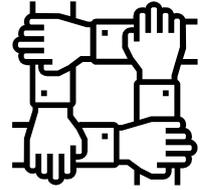
**+417,060**

CIVIL SERVICE PERSONNEL  
JOINED CDM



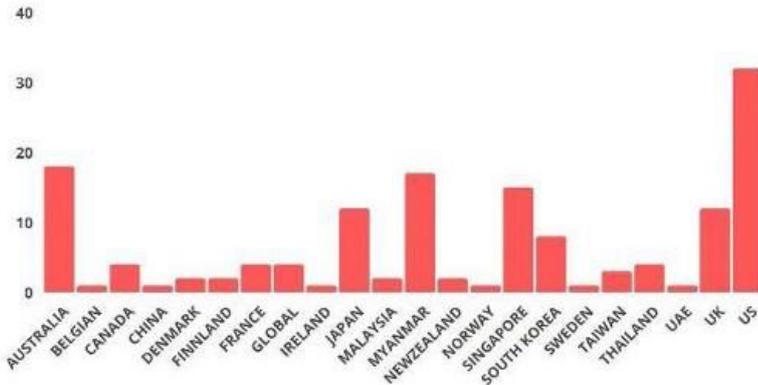
**+2,000**

SOLDIERS JOINED CDM

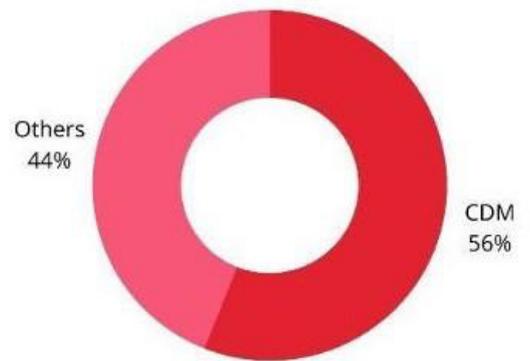


**+147**

CDM SUPPORT GROUPS  
ACROSS THE WORLD



A total of 147 CDM Support Groups across the world are working with CRPH-OFP



56% of total funds raised by CRPH-OFP were used to support CDM (April to July)



**295,802**

CDM heroes were  
suspended or removed or  
dismissed



**505(A)**

**At least 3,622**

CDM heroes were charged  
with Section 505 (a) of  
Myanmar Penal Code

# MYANMAR'S PEOPLE REJECT MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

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Myanmar is not a failed state. Its condition is not that of chronic state weakness caused by civil war, corruption, or entrenched dictatorship. Rather, it is a country where the public, as well as both the private and public sectors, reject the military coup staged on 1 February 2021. In this sense, Myanmar is a country where the near entirety of the population - including civil servants and the private sector - is staging a general strike to peacefully protest the illegal seizure of power by the Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw. This effort is the CDM, a non-violent endeavour of an entire population to resist brutal dictatorship.

By early-2021, the public had experienced nearly a decade of civilian leadership, economic growth and more generally reform and positive change. This was particularly so after the fully free elections in 2015 that brought the NLD political party, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to power. The prospects of returning to decades of impoverishment and dictatorial violence through Tatmadaw rule was revolting to the tens of millions of Myanmar citizens who sought to show their unwillingness to accept the coup through peaceful demonstrations in countless villages, towns, and cities across the country. CDM is composed of three major groups from the Myanmar people: the general public, private sector businesses and associations, and civil service personnel.

## CDM by Myanmar's Public

Since the 1 February coup, countless protests have taken place daily across the entire country to show solidarity for CDM and to demonstrate an absolute rejection of the junta. Over February and March, hundreds-of-thousands of normal Myanmar citizens gathered across the country's cities, towns, and villages to demonstrate their anger and demand a future of federal democracy. These early mass demonstrations served to unite the various societies within Myanmar. The revulsion of the junta is near universal. For instance, Myanmar's national football team refused to play under military dictatorship, while

hundreds of monks led a prayer session supporting CDM and protestors. Numerous professional associations have regularly demonstrated on the streets wearing their respective attires (doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, and lawyers).

Women have been prominent in the protests and LGBTs groups have also joined protests. The mass protests were not limited to one ethnic group or a particular area of the country. They were across the entire country, spanning religious, ethnic, and socio-economic lines. What united all the millions of people peacefully protesting was a shared desire for a better future defined by a path of democratization, peace, and economic development. The traumas of decades of brutal dictatorship, civil war and crushing impoverishment under the military are too painful to accept returning to. As such, some of the most common placards held high delivered the key messages - "Respect Our Votes" and "Say No to Coup." Some young women joined early protests playfully wearing wedding gowns and holding placards with messages such as "we don't accept military coup." Myanmar's people just want a normal life for themselves and their families. They know the military will never provide that.

Given its toxic history, Myanmar's military predictably resorted to mass violence against peaceful protesters as they have done so many times over the decades since independence in 1948. Large protests were no longer possible by the end of March after the military started regularly using war weaponry automatic rifles, rocket propelled grenades, and machine guns to disperse peaceful protest rallies. Despite this violence by an organization claiming to protect the people, viz. a national army, Myanmar's people have continued to protest across the country using novel methods - such as so-called 'flash mobs' - to avoid opportunities by the junta to kill. Such is their determination and despite the risk of death, Myanmar's people can still be seen from the smallest villages to the largest cities demonstrating their desire for a return to democracy and a better future.

In addition to public protests out on the streets, different methods have been utilized by the general public. Since early-February, the public has sounded out their frustration with the coup by loudly banging pots and pans at 8 pm every evening. Furthermore, other peaceful demonstration methods have included candlelight vigils, night processions with flashlights, hanging htamin (sarongs) across streets, social media strikes, releasing red balloons and throwing red paint a crossroads to highlight military violence.

As the military increasingly cracked down with widespread violence, the public staged the first of many "silent strikes" on March 24, staying home to protest the junta. This left the streets completely deserted as people refrained from going out or working. Supermarkets, convenience stores, delivery services, restaurants, and local markets closed in solidarity. Generation Z (Gen Z), born after the millennium and an important demographic who are brave and determined, took part in the strikes and protests peacefully by numerous creative ways, chanting slogans and singing songs even during the brutal crackdown.

In addition to assorted methods of peaceful protests, the Myanmar public has also peacefully resisted the junta through several types of boycott campaigns as part of CDM. The goal has been to deprive the junta of both recognition and revenues. Prominently, and to great effect, the public has boycotted the products and services of the military's holding companies - Myanmar Economic Holdings (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Cooperation (MEC). Additionally, the businesses of 'cronies' (essentially lackie stooges) loyal to the military have also been widely boycotted by the public, such as Asia World Group, Shwe Taung Group and Zay Kabar Company. These boycotts have been highly successful given the public's resolve to peacefully resist the military. For instance, a military-owned brewery has seen sale volumes reduced by 46 percent year-on-year. This success directly hits the finances of the junta and its lacky cronies.

Particularly significant to CDM has been the public's widespread refusal to pay taxes and fees to the military regime. The premise for this is simple: the junta has no legitimacy to manage public finances. Any revenues accruing to the military regime will assuredly only be used to bolster the junta, such as through arms procurement, rather than be invested in public goods and services. Much of the public has refused to pay

electricity bills or pay their regular taxes. Across the country, many farmers have refused to repay agriculture loans as have CDM civil service personnel. Other prominent revenue sources have collapsed because of boycott campaigns, most notably the national lottery that generated tens of millions of dollars every year for state budget.<sup>3</sup>

### **CDM by Myanmar's Civil Service Personnel**

Given its origins, civil service personnel are a major part of CDM. Civil service personnel from across the entire public sector have refused *en masse* to work for the illegal military regime. This is notable because, for instance, after the coup d'état in 1988 the civil service agreed to keep working for the next military regime. The actions of civil service personnel in 2021 demonstrates that even the professional bureaucracy of the country does not recognize the junta as having any legitimacy to claim government by seizing power through force. In order to explain why the term "failed state" gives a false impression, it is important to note just how comprehensive the boycott of work by civil servants has been. What Myanmar is experiencing is a general strike of historic proportions. By February 17 alone, tens of thousands of civil service personnel from 21 ministries in 245 townships had already joined CDM.

The junta was caught off guard that so much of the bureaucracy would be unwilling to work for them. CDM civil service personnel come from the whole gamut of ministries. These include the major line ministries like Health and Education but also more conservative ones that were led by generals, as per the provisions of the 2008 Constitution.

For instance, the Ministry of Home Affairs has seen large numbers of staff join CDM from the General Administration Department, the backbone of public administration in the country. Though in fewer numbers, thousands of police officers and fire-fighters have also joined CDM. Specialist agencies have also joined CDM. For instance, significant numbers of staff left from the Central Bank of Myanmar as well as other state-owned banks.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that civil service personnel participating in CDM are not abandoning their duties to the public. Health care personnel initiated CDM by refusing to work under the command of Tatmadaw. Ministry of Health personnel, approximately 43,367, have joined CDM. Though they

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/world/south-asia/news/myanmar-activists->

left their positions in government hospitals, they have continued providing health care services through charity hospitals and clinics and via home visits. By further example, approximately 300,000 staff (75 percent of a total of 430,000 personnel) of the Ministry of Education's staff nationwide joined CDM.<sup>4</sup> After the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education had the second highest proportion of CDM civil service personnel. Teaching under military control was simply untenable. CDM teachers have been registering with different teaching platforms to offer continuous education to the younger generations within the country. One such platform is the University Interim Administrative Councils, which was established by 53 universities across Myanmar by the NUG. Similarly, 50,000 personnel from the Ministry of Energy and Electricity have joined CDM but unofficially continued to maintain the electricity system while ignoring calls by the junta to collect electricity bills from the public.

### CDM by Myanmar's Private Sector

In other countries, the private sector often engages more with autocratic regimes than other sectors. However, following the coup, Myanmar's private sector has also joined CDM in various ways and in large numbers. Soon after the coup, personnel from across the banking industry joined CDM, effectively crippling banks. By the 8th of February, almost all the private banks branches were closed since the majority of staff had joined CDM. While this resulted in sluggish banking services and financial transactions, the striking banking staff were widely supported by the public because it meant the junta could not present their illegal actions as leading to a "normal" situation in the country.

Along with the public, many private businesses also chose not to pay regular taxes and fees to the military regime. Businesses and vendors across the country stopped selling products from military

owned and affiliated firms. Lottery tickets, normally widely available, became such toxic products that the junta felt compelled to force its own personnel to buy tickets in order to keep the scheme solvent. Participation in CDM from the private sector was boosted by public campaigns such as the "Stop buying Lottery Ticket and No Commercial and Income Tax," which used a very blunt message: "Why are you paying the taxes to buy the weapons to kill us?" By example, many hospitality businesses such as restaurants and supermarkets stopped collecting commercial tax, which is akin to a sales tax.

Moreover, many staff in private businesses encouraged their employers to stop paying corporate income taxes and other related fees. Along with this, on 4 March 2021, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) passed an amendment to the Union Tax Law suspending taxes until September 30 and ordering staff from government departments to stop collecting taxes."<sup>5</sup>

The cumulative effect of these boycotts and campaigns to cripple state revenues are hard to quantify since the junta isn't exactly celebrating its assuredly feeble finances, but the loss of revenue from critically important sources, like commercial tax, must be significant. As is true for the general public and civil service personnel, the actions of the private sector to participate in CDM are squarely premised on a rejection of the military's illegal seizure of power. Decades of economic stagnation under military rule had left Myanmar one of the poorest countries in Asia. After the past decade of economic reform and growth, the private sector also has no desire to see the military reassert dictatorship and its toxic formula of 'crony capitalism' that is based on exploitation of the country's people and resources.

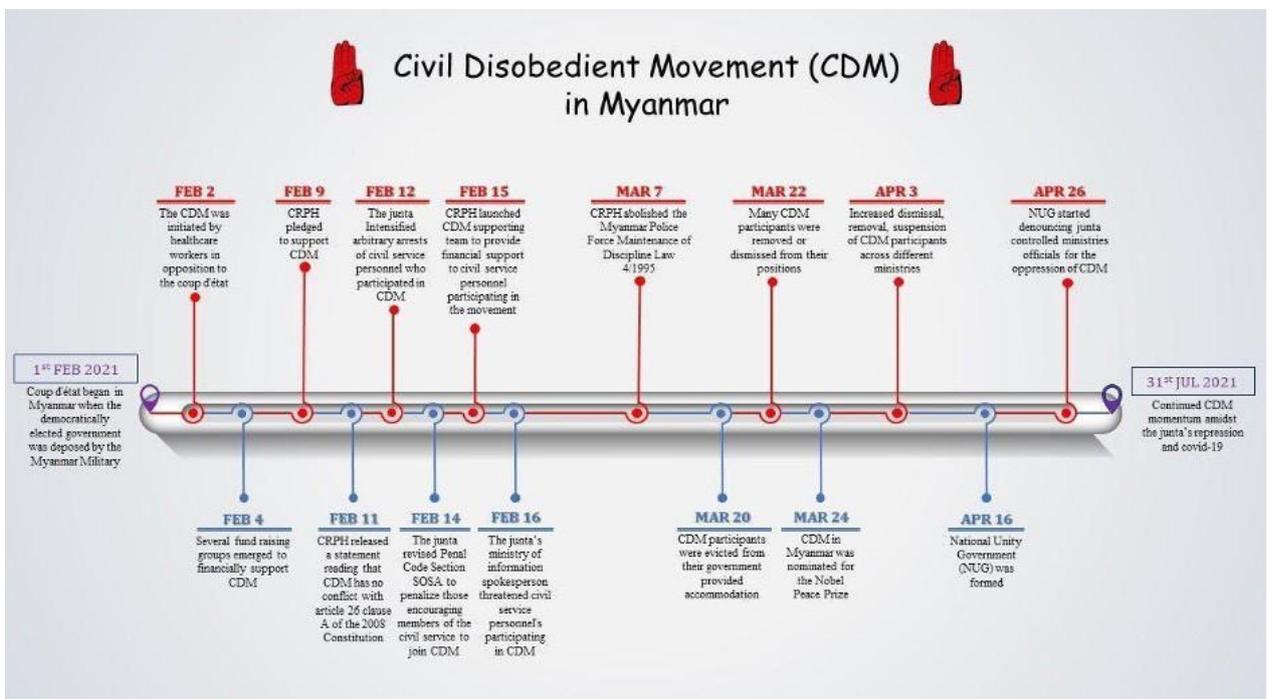
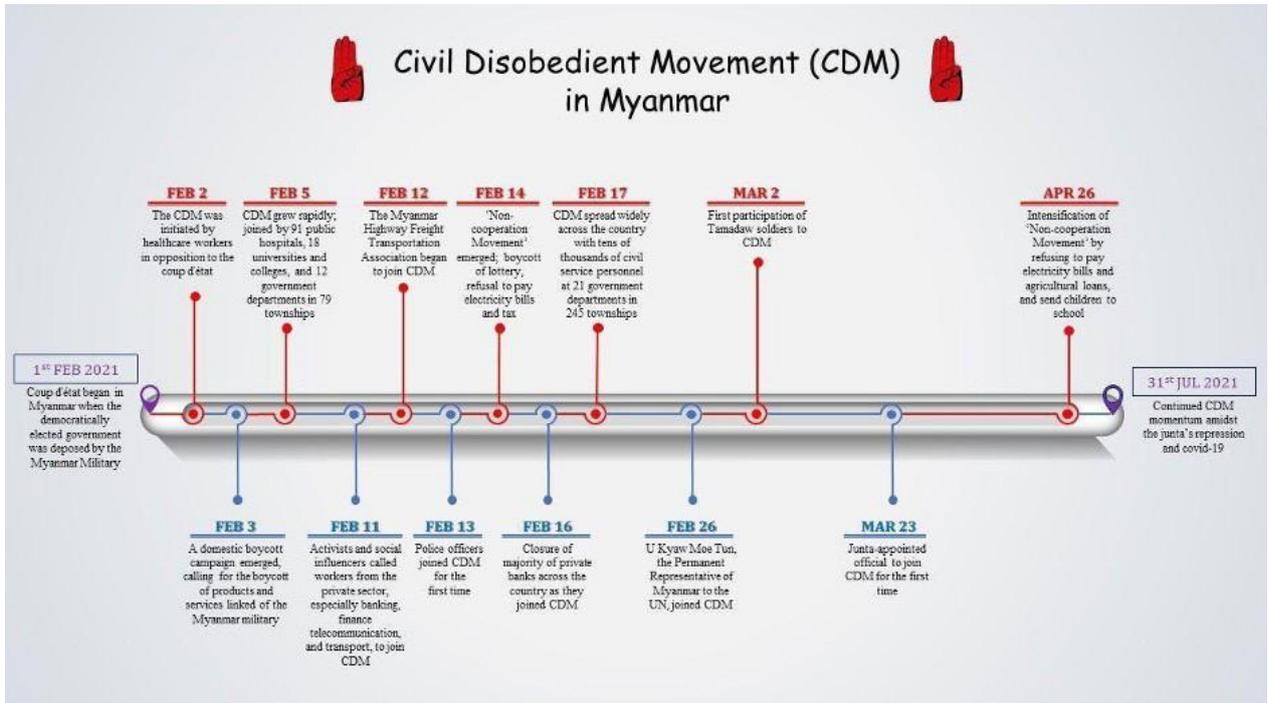
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<sup>4</sup> This figure is based on the Ministry of Health's size for the latest year available, 2018. [https://www.burmalibrary.org/en/parents-teachers-and-students-boycott-slave-education-system?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=p-md\\_e3d1fa3909c6560403882549b5e0ffac05260bdd-1628787968-0-](https://www.burmalibrary.org/en/parents-teachers-and-students-boycott-slave-education-system?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=p-md_e3d1fa3909c6560403882549b5e0ffac05260bdd-1628787968-0-)

gqNtZGzNAiKjcnBszQei

<sup>5</sup> Tax chief brushes off public campaign to starve the regime of revenue, Frontier, 2021 March

# Timeline of CDM Events Showing Myanmar People's Rejection of the Military Junta



# CDM IS A NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENT SEEKING PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

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CDM is fundamentally a mass movement of the Myanmar people to achieve peace and democracy in their country. The ten years before the February 1 coup saw significant reforms, including towards democracy, peace and economic growth. CDM is about a people's absolute conviction to reject a return to rule by barbaric military juntas, a scourge that has plagued Myanmar for far too long. Peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression are universal human rights. This is recognized in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights. In the world's modern history, it is hard to find a suitable comparator to Myanmar's CDM, whereby an entire population has effectively gone on general strike. Perhaps in recognition of this, CDM has even been nominated for a Nobel peace prize for 2022.<sup>6</sup>

Standing in contrast to the peaceful protests of normal Myanmar citizens expressing their right to freedom of speech and association, the military junta has consistently chosen to respond through barbarity. Even as simple an act as banging a pot or pan to share their frustration has resulted in violence against normal citizens. Security personnel began arresting housewives who were beating the pots and pans in their compounds to show them they could not accept the junta. When this did not stop the banging, the soldiers resorted to randomly shooting into buildings. Routine killings of peaceful protesters began in Nay Pyi Taw on February 9th when 20-year-old Mya Thwe Thwe Khaing was killed by security forces.<sup>7</sup> Since then, violence by junta forces has been the norm.

Even more sinister has been the junta's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A third wave of the pandemic hit Myanmar in July 2021. The junta responded by manipulating the outbreak to force the public into engaging with the regime. For instance, the junta banned the sale of oxygen to the public unless they had a letter of reference from their local

administrator, essentially a local bureaucrat appointed by the military regime. There were also widespread incidents of the military seizing medical equipment to use in their own hospitals. In sum, as noted in The Guardian newspaper, the junta "systematically persecut[ed] medics: raided the health facilities for treating the protestors, searched and fired at the ambulances, detained, beat and killed the health care professionals."<sup>8</sup>

On top of the overt violence, the junta has reverted to Orwellian practices of surveillance, coercion, and imprisonment. Soon after the coup, the junta created the "505 A" penal code to ostensibly legalize it making mass, and often random, arrests to cower the population. This draconian tool has been used extensively against CDM participants, both normal citizens but especially civil service personnel. Repression and threats against whom increased significantly when the National Unity Government was officially announced as the interim government of Myanmar on 16 April 2021. Given the Movement's effectiveness, and hence their resulting loathing of CDM, the junta declared it as the "country destroying movement."<sup>9</sup> In retribution, many CDM civil servants were thrown out of the public housing and issued legal notices. Amongst others, countless medical workers were issued letters and threats to come back to work. From the multitudes who have refused, many were a 505 A penal code charge, arrested, often tortured, and then imprisoned.

Such is their zeal to imprison political opponents who reject their illegal seizure of power, the junta has gone so far as to create sham courts inside prisons whereby heavy sentences can be handed out with little regard for due process. Despite the fundamentally peaceful nature of CDM since the coup, the violence and repression by the junta has been extreme by any standard of decency. By August 2021, 927 civil

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<sup>6</sup> <https://scandasia.com/myanmar-protesters-nominated-for-2022-nobel-peace-prize/>

<sup>7</sup> Myanmar coup: Woman shot during anti-coup protests dies

<sup>8</sup> Doctors under fire as Myanmar military targets efforts to aid

injured protestors

<sup>9</sup> Myanmar must continuously implement democracy and federalism: Senior General

servants were warranted with 505 A penal code and arrested and imprisoned, 295,802 were thrown out of their public housing. Overall, as of 11 August 2021, 5,550 Myanmar citizens had been arrested; 1,984 were

charged with a warrant and managing to evade arrest, while 965 normal citizens have been killed by security forces.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://aappb.org>

# MYANMAR'S PEOPLE DEMAND REPRESENTATION BY THE COMMITTEE REPRESENTING PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW (CRPH) AND THE NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

CDM, as a national movement representing a wide spectrum of Myanmar society, signifies that the people recognize the NUG as their rightful and legitimate representatives. As mentioned previously, The NUG is an interim government composed of ministers and deputy-ministers chosen through a consultative process. Preceding it, and still acting as the legislative body for the NUG, is the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH). This body is composed of Members of Parliament who won the legitimate elections in November 2020 and senior leaders chosen through a consensual process with a wide range of other national stakeholders.

It is important to emphasize the intrinsic link between CDM and the NUG. Many CDM civil service personnel have joined, and continue to join, the NUG. The NUG government formed with an initial nine ministries<sup>11</sup> The NUG encouraged the wider Movement but also welcomed CDM civil service personnel to join its ministries to work for peace and democracy. These experienced CDM civil service personnel have been exceptionally important and the NUG's ministries are now functioning with a workforce largely composed of CDM participants. For example, among the NUG's ministries, the Ministry of Health has a particularly high number of CDM medical personnel. They are serving critical roles in assorted health care programs in conflict areas, emergency hospitals, IDP camps, and via online telehealth programs. Currently there are 450 CDM volunteers (CDM students and civil service personnels) in the NUG's Ministry of Health's program to deliver necessary health care to the public, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This role is invaluable during a global pandemic when the junta does little to nothing to support the population.

CDM civil service personnel joining the NUG come from across the public sector and include senior ranks such as Deputy Director and above. These senior CDM personnel now play leading roles in NUG ministries working to provide social services to the Myanmar public.

Given these sacrifices, essentially a life's work, an imperative of the NUG, and the public's priority demand of it, are that CDM civil service personnel be supported. In early September 2021, seven months after the coup, peaceful CDM participants still faced enormous challenges. This is primarily because of the violence and repression of the junta's security forces. A majority of them are threatened with the 505-A penal code and have been dismissed and removed from their positions. The constant fear of arrest is compounded by the economic difficulties including lack of income generation opportunities or job opportunities to sustain their daily lives and support families. Lastly, the psychological burden – a sense of insecurity, arrest and imprisonment, financial duress, and the loss of a life's profession – leave many CDM civil service personnel feeling isolated and depressed.

The NUG, with dedicated support from the CRPH, recognizes these challenges and has sought to address them as best possible. The dedicated working group, known as the "CRPH-CDM Supporting Team," was formed on February 16<sup>th</sup> to support the CDM civil service personnel. Local committees, known as "CDM Township Support Teams" were also formed with Members of Parliaments, activists, and civil society organizations to support civil service personnel across the country. Civil service personnel who joined CDM submitted forms, including the

<sup>11</sup> These were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Education, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Ministry of Electricity

and Energy, Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs, Ministry of Human Rights, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and the Ministry of Labor

personal details, to the CRPH-CDM Supporting Team via a website or through the CDM Township Support Teams so that these CDMers can be recognized as national heroes, when it is safe to do so in the future, and so that they can be quickly recruited back into the civil service when the junta is overthrown. CDM civil service personnel who have financial difficulties have been supported by the CRPH-CDM Supporting Team since February 16th.

Furthermore, after the formation of NUG, there is a dedicated NUG 'CDM Success Committee', which was formalized on 27 April 2021. The committee supports NUG ministries to engage CDM personnel to work for them. The committee also communicates related information to them and provides additional financial support where possible. While there have been commendable efforts by the NUG, as well as the public, to provide financial support, the needs are immense and also compounded by a historic confluence of other challenges. These include

supporting internally displaced persons, disaster affected people, vulnerable communities and COVID-19 patients, amongst others. The junta has also actively worked to block the financial transfers necessary to support CDM participants.

Lastly, it is worth noting that those civil service personnel who have yet to join CDM often do so because of threats and coercion from the junta rather than loyalty to it. Most civil service personnel live in government-provided dormitories and the families of personnel are in effect kept as hostages to prevent further CDM desertions. This is particularly true for the police. As more civil service personnel joined CDM, the coercion against those remaining steadily increased. Regardless of the risks, many civil service personnel still in junta-controlled ministries are secretly working to support the NUG and efforts to rid the country of military dictatorship.

# THE TATMADAW'S FAILED COUP

SAC is not a government, and certainly not that of Myanmar's. It has not, and should not, be internationally recognized because of its illegitimacy and barbarity. Considering this, the generals' illegal actions on 1 February should be classified by the international community as a failed coup. This is because the Tatmadaw has not consolidated control over the country.

It bears repeating, Myanmar's people do not accept the junta. The junta may give their illegal regime whatever name they wish and lamely use whatever nomenclature they like to title themselves as respectable leaders. But it does nothing to hide the fact that they are to the core but tyrants. Myanmar's military created the 2008 Constitution. Despite this, they still violated that constitution's provisions by staging an illegal coup after a credible election produced results they did not like. Hence, Myanmar's people can no longer accept the military in its current form and leadership in any way being part of the Myanmar government.

The generals have demonstrated that their words and promises are meaningless. They only care about controlling power and their personal greed. They have been destroying the country for over six decades. This is unacceptable to Myanmar's 52 million people. Given the strength and massive scale of the CDM movement, the junta cannot effectively run the state apparatus. While it replaced some CDM civil service personnel with its own lackies, it has come nowhere close to replacing a bureaucracy that has largely abandoned government service. Given the strength and massive scale of the CDM movement, the junta cannot effectively run the state apparatus. While it replaced some CDM civil service personnel with its own lack-ies, it has come nowhere close to replacing a bureaucracy that has largely abandoned government service.

On top of mass participation by the public in peaceful protests and other acts of defiance by the private sector, such as boycotting government taxes and other revenue streams, the junta controls little outside of its own security forces and immediate proxies, such as the Union Solidarity and Development Party. CDM has had significant impacts on the junta's ability to manage critical sectors, such as banking and currency, public finance, transportation, trade and investment.<sup>12</sup>

For the international community, there is nothing pragmatic about trying to work with the junta when the people of Myanmar so viscerally reject them playing a dictatorial role in the country's governance and economy. The people attempted compromise for a long time and the 1 February coup demonstrated with perfect clarity that the military's leadership will never truly accept anything less than full control over the country.

Such absolutism by the military has provoked a historic moment of national self-reflection. The violence and barbarity of Myanmar's military since 1 February has engendered solidarity across Myanmar to resist dictatorship but more importantly to seek equity and democracy through true federalism. CDM has been at the forefront of this and, as such, has been encouraged and supported by a wide range of national stakeholders who previously may have not been particularly close. For instance, ethnic armed organizations, who have long battled the military, were horrified by the violence being perpetrated on peaceful protesters across the country.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Bamar-majority regions have come to appreciate the violence and repression that ethnic-minorities have long faced at the hands of the military.

As the junta cracked down on peaceful protests, Generation Z youth activists and CDM civil servants fled

<sup>12</sup> As but one example, UNDP reported that "Supply chains are breaking down as the work of custom agents, dock-workers, lorry drivers and rail workers has come to a halt and with key ports paralysed, some shipping firms have temporarily stopped services to the country" Covid 19, Coup D'etat and Poverty, UNDP, 2021 April.

<sup>13</sup> The Kachin Independence Organization, for instance, issued a statement in late-March 2021 condemning the violent crackdown of security forces against peaceful protesters across the country and

vowed to stand with civilians to resist military rule. Similarly, the Three Brotherhood Alliance, a coalition of three ethnic armed groups issued the statement and promised to join "the Spring Revolution against the military dictatorship." The three are the Arakan Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army. Alliance of ethnic armed groups pledged support for Myanmar's Spring Revolution, <https://thediomat.com/2021/03/alliance-of-ethnic-armed-groups-pledge-support-for-myanmars-spring-revolution/>

to areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations as they faced the danger of arrest, torture and imprisonment by the military.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the junta, the NUG has widespread support from the Myanmar public. Core to that support is Myanmar's CDM; a historic effort by a people to resist barbarism and dictatorship. From across society, its participants have sought to peacefully change their

country for the better. Given such sacrifices and bravery in the face of overt violence, it is both pragmatic and morally right for the international community to recognize the NUG as the Myanmar people's representative. It is only the NUG in peaceful, consensual collaboration with a wide range of national stakeholders that will return the country to a path of democracy and peace. The NUG is a law-abiding interim government that can return Myanmar to a place of dignity and respect in the international community.

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, approximately 5,000 activists, CDM leaders,

politicians and civilians are now staying in the areas under the protection of Karen National Union in the southeast of the country.