



Special Advisory Council for — MYANMAR —

Nationwide New Year Strikes Show the Strength of Democratic Resistance in Myanmar

15 April, 2022

The massive scale of nationwide strikes held in Myanmar over Thingyan sends a powerful message that democratic resistance to the military coup will continue into the New Year. Even under sustained attack, the resistance is holding its ground against the military junta and laying the foundations of a future federal democracy, says the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

Myanmar's streets have been emptied for days when they would usually be packed with people joining water festivities for Thingyan, to wash away sins of the previous year and celebrate the New Year in Myanmar. The New Year itself falls on Sunday 17 April.

The empty streets are an act of nationwide resistance to the military junta, which attempted to seize power in a coup last year and is trying to create a perception that the situation in Myanmar is normalising. The junta is reported to have forced its own employees to take part in official Thingyan festivities in a vain attempt to bolster participation.

"The massive New Year strikes in Myanmar send a powerful message that the people's commitment to democratic resistance continues," said Chris Sidoti of SAC-M. **"The military wants to present the situation as normalising - with these strikes the people of Myanmar are demonstrating very clearly that it is not."**

In early April alone, junta forces are reported to have set fire to hundreds of homes across townships in Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing regions. Junta forces have waged a months-long campaign of arson across central and northwest Myanmar in an attempt to crush strong local resistance to the coup there.

Days before Thingyan, junta forces launched deadly airstrikes and artillery against civilian targets in the Karen State town of Lay Kay Kaw in Karen National Union territory, as part of a sustained and devastating campaign of aerial bombardment against allied democratic resistance forces in the southeast.

The military junta's forces have repeatedly committed mass atrocities in deliberate acts of terror as part of a sustained, widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population since it launched the coup last year. The attack has devastated lives but has not resulted in the military gaining greater control over the country.



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“The democratic resistance in Myanmar has held its ground against the military junta over the past year. Indeed, there is now less territory in Myanmar under the control of the military than there was twelve months ago,” said Marzuki Darusman of SAC-M. **“The junta had expected to subdue the people within days of its ill-fated February coup of last year, in the manner of a similar case in Ukraine. That seems to be a fatal mistake.”**

The one-year anniversary of the appointment of the National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also falls over Thingyan, on Saturday 16 April. Along with Ethnic Revolutionary Organisations (EROs), the National Unity Consultative Council, political parties and protest groups, these institutions are working to shape a future Myanmar pursuant to the Federal Democracy Charter, albeit while under constant attack from the junta.

“The National Unity Government formed one year ago. Since then, it has taken vital steps to lay the foundations of a future federal democracy in Myanmar, such as accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court to end the impunity that has devastated Myanmar for so long,” said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. **“What is missing in this picture is the international support for the people of Myanmar. Where is it?”**

As Myanmar enters a New Year, a time of renewed hope, SAC-M is calling on the international community to finally step up and recognise the NUG as the legitimate government of Myanmar. The NUG is deserving of recognition as the government of Myanmar, according to internationally accepted criteria. States must increase political and financial support to the NUG, including by granting the NUG access to US\$1 billion of Myanmar assets frozen by the United States Government after the coup.

States must massively increase cross-border assistance to Myanmar through the NUG and EROs, with supply lines coming from neighbouring countries, in order to effectively address the junta-made humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

Finally, SAC-M is calling for a global three cuts strategy against the junta through the imposition and enforcement of a comprehensive global arms embargo against Myanmar, targeted economic sanctions against senior junta members and military aligned businesses, and referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

