



[The Military Junta in Myanmar Declares Martial Law After Engaging in More Lethal Violence Against Anti-Coup Protesters](#)

Myanmar's military junta has imposed martial law across the country as it continues to escalate its ruthless crackdown on mass resistance to the recent February coup. The move comes in the aftermath of the deadliest round of violence there, as the junta accelerates its use of lethal force against protesters. The ruling authorities in Myanmar have garnered overwhelming international condemnation for their brutal efforts to suppress largescale opposition to the coup. Additionally, impartial independent observers have disputed the military's claim of a fraudulent November 2020 election – the basis by which it has tried to defend its actions to oust the previous government. Telling accounts of security officials defecting because of their refusal to engage in violence against civilians have also emerged, highlighting the prevalence and disturbing levels of human rights violations the military has been willing to commit to hold on to power. Myanmar has already been under a state of emergency in the preceding weeks, and the declaration of martial law is the junta's latest attempt to cement its absolute control over the country and all of its institutions.

Around 150 peaceful protesters have been killed in Myanmar since the February 1st coup, according to some of the latest figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). This includes at least 56 people over this past weekend – the deadliest period yet since the ruling junta seized power and deposed the previous civilian government. However, even more worryingly, rights groups fear that this number may be even higher as an accurate confirmation of the total number of casualties has been difficult due to the dire security situation and a crackdown on independent media in Myanmar as well. In addition to the civilians killed, more than 2,000 others have been arrested, criminally charged, or sentenced in recent weeks. Photos and videos posted on social media around the time of the martial law declaration showed lengthy truck convos entering Yangon, as the military further increased its presence on the streets of the major city following the announcement. Authorities have also tried to hinder both the ability of citizens to continue organizing protests and media coverage of the crisis by cutting internet and cell phone service.

One of the noteworthy factors that has been on the rise in Myanmar in the weeks since the military coup is anti-China sentiment. While the majority of protesters have been peaceful, some view the regime in Beijing as a key supporter of the coup which has emboldened it to violently suppress mass opposition and resistance. As such, Chinese-run factories and businesses have been targeted in a growing number of attacks. Despite the fact that almost all of the international community has strongly condemned the actions of Myanmar's military junta, the Chinese government has been largely muted – lending to a belief by some that it silently backs the coup's takeover.

The indefinite detainment of former State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has also added to the ire of citizens in Myanmar and exacerbated the situation there. Suu Kyi has been held at an unknown location in the aftermath of the military coup and her subsequent arrest, facing questionable charges that most say are politically motivated in an effort to keep her in custody. Suu Kyi's status has undoubtedly fueled the crisis and analysts point out that the junta's decision to impose martial law is clearly aimed at trying to "legitimize" its actions, particularly in the face of mounting criticism regarding its heavy-handed and repressive tactics.