



Global Outrage Towards the Myanmar Junta's Brutal Crackdown Grows Following Deadly Violence on the Country's Armed Forces Day

Myanmar's military junta marked the country's Armed Forces Day by ruthlessly cracking down on peaceful protesters in the streets of major cities. The military of Myanmar, called the Tatmadaw, hosted a parade in the capital city of Naypyidaw to celebrate their so-called accomplishments in the last year, including the coup that ousted democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The Tatmadaw warned demonstrators that planned to protest on the military holiday that they risked being "shot in the head or back." Despite this, hundreds of pro-democracy and anti-coup demonstrators flocked to the streets in Naypyidaw, Yangon, and elsewhere in what proved to be the bloodiest day since the coup took place back in early February. More than 100 protesters were murdered, bringing the death toll of civilians killed by the military to over 500 people in the aftermath of the Tatmadaw seizing power.

Around the world, leaders reacted with outrage to the Tatmadaw's latest crackdown. Dominic Raab, Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, called it a "new low" for Myanmar, and the European Union delegation to the country said that Armed Forces Day would be looked upon in the future as a day of "terror and dishonor." The American Ambassador to Myanmar, Thomas Vajda, said that the people had made their will clear, and that they didn't want to live under military rule. In total, the defense chiefs from a dozen nations including the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and Australia issued a joint statement condemning the Tatmadaw's violent actions. Additionally, some United Nations officials called for an international emergency summit to deal with the ongoing crisis. The lone country appearing to stand with the junta is Russia, who sent a senior official to meet with military leaders and attend the parade as a guest of honor.

In a speech during the military's parade, the junta's leader Min Aung Hlaing said that the military intended to call elections and relinquish power, but declined to give a timetable. Hlaing also warned of continuing civil disobedience, as state-run news outlets attempted to push a narrative, blaming protesters for the violence being perpetrated by the military. Experts have noted that it is unclear how legitimate elections can be called when the military is still detaining dozens of lawmakers, including Aung San Suu Kyi. In a video forum following Armed Forces Day, one lawmaker – who is currently in hiding – said that the military had brought shame and dishonor to Myanmar, further emphasizing the disconnect between the country's military and civilian leadership.

In recent days, hundreds of protesters who had been detained in Yangon have been released, as international pressure grows on the junta. During the past week, upwards of 900 people were freed from prison, although 3,000 remain behind bars. Over the same timeframe, sanctions have been placed on the junta's economic and financial interests, as the global community seeks to pressure the Tatmadaw into respecting the rule of law. The United States and the United Kingdom have both placed sanctions on a conglomerate owned by the Tatmadaw, and are seeking to impose additional sanctions on sectors of the Burmese economy that have heavy influence from the military.