Myanmar: Wide Spread Civil Disobedience Movement and Arrests:

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A fortnight after the coup, the Army continues with its relentless campaign of suppressing dissent in all forms and have been least bothered about international reaction or large scale domestic opposition that has spread throughout the country. Armoured vehicles roam the streets of Yangon to intimidate the people. People in their own way are opposing the regime, some by banging the pots in the night either to warn of the incoming security forces to arrest or to show general opposition to the Military takeover. Mid night raids are taking place in many townships. It is no coincidence that at the time of the Army Chief's public address to the country over the Military TV in late evening, the house holders in Yangon began banging their pots.

Externally, the UN Security Council passed a very weak resolution on the developments in Myanmar. The Statement

1. Expressed deep concern at the declaration of emergency and detention of members of the Government including State Counsellor Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.
2. Emphasized the need for continued support of democratic transition in Myanmar.
3. Encouraged dialogue and reconciliation.
4. Expressed concern on the restrictions on civil society, journalists and media workers.
5. Reaffirmed the strong commitment in the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and unity of Myanmar.

Indian media hailed the statement as a “diplomatic success” of India. The statement was said to be unanimous thanks to the efforts of India although this pious resolutions have no meaning and will have no impact on the Military Junta. Significantly India is yet to call it a ‘Coup’

The UNHCR on human rights had a special session and issued a statement that it “deplores the removal of democratically elected Government and called for an immediate and unconditional release of all persons arbitrarily detained and the lifting of the state of
emergency."

True to form both China and Russia dissociated themselves from this statement. There were demonstrations before the Chinese Embassy of China telling them “Shame on You”.

The US has not only condemned the coup but followed it up with sanctions of ten former and current Military Officers and three entities. The ten officers include the seven military and ex military officers in the Junta and three other ministers appointed after the Coup. The three entities included Myanmar Enterprises, Myanmar Imperial Jade Company and Cancre a Gems and Jewellery” company. All the three entities are controlled by the Military directly and indirectly. It is said that there are at least 133 companies that are wholly or partly overseen by the Generals and their subordinates in Myanmar and this Coup would help them to make more money.

US assistance to Myanmar- has been frozen targeting those that were beneficial to the Government while maintaining support for Health care, Civil society groups and many other areas that benefit the Burmese people directly.

Sanctions in the past have had no impact on the military as we had seen before as there are countries like China and those in ASEAN who are ready to undermine the sanctions no matter what strong statements are issued under the aegis of international entities.

In this connection, a letter published by three women who are involved in development studies under a pseudonym ‘Phyo Thet Tin’ merit serious consideration.

The statement starts with an appeal that the World can help Myanmar by offering long term support to civilian efforts to build peace and democracy and not by cutting all ties. Specifically the statement

1. Appealed to demonstrate solidarity through long term support for civilian efforts towards democracy, peace, human rights and inclusive sustainable development.

2. Believes that community centred policies are crucial and that the political and economic consequences of the Coup should be borne by the Tatmadaw (the Military) and not the People.

3. Essential to support in two areas- Education and Health now endangered by the Covid 19 (The Wuhan Virus)

4. Rather than an economic blockade, many in the Country would back measures targeted squarely at the Military.
5. Global arms embargoes, stricter sanctions on Military linked business could be undertaken.

6. International response should support democratic ambitions of the People and compliment their efforts.

The Military Junta Chief has appeared in public twice by the Army controlled Television with an appeal to focus on their daily routine and the General with a “Straight Caked” face justified his action as in “furtherance of democracy” in Myanmar.

The Junta has carried out a number of arrests - most of the NLD leadership, those activists leading the demonstrations, civil servants who failed to join duty including doctors and medical staff. Other arrests include, those working in Election Commission, political activists, monks, and writers.

Despite a slow beginning, demonstrations have gathered momentum and people from all walks of life have defied the Junta’s orders of not assembling of more than five people, night curfews and other midnight raids. Night curfew has been imposed in most of the townships. The Army has armed itself by suspending laws relating to citizens’ privacy and is now at liberty to enter any residence and arrest anyone without warrant. A cyber security law has been passed for the companies to retain their data within the country and to produce the data on demand by the Army. Those spreading disinformation or misinformation are liable to three years of imprisonment.

The security forces used live bullets in clearing a crowd at Naypitaw on 6th Feb and one 20-year old student was critically injured. The student succumbed to the injuries on the 14th of Feb.

Irrawady in its commentary on the ongoing resistance movement has classified those resisting the coup into four categories.

1. Those activists of the 1988 movement like Min Ko Naing who have openly defied the authorities. It is now learnt the Min Ko Naing has since been arrested. It is also said that Gen. Shwe Mann once a powerful individual as the former Speaker and his son have also been detained.

2. Those civil servants including those in the medical services who have disobeyed the orders to return to work and have actively followed the “disobedience movement.”

3. The elected leaders of the NLD and others belonging to the NLD.

4. The Generation “Z” of young student activists who are experiencing the Army’s iron fist for the first time.

While the Army has been brutal in dealing with the first three categories, it is yet to be seen how they are going to tackle the Gen’Z’. In the
1988 Coup, the students left for borders and to other neighbouring countries to continue the fight only to be disappointed by the lack of support of those countries in addition to the unforgiving and harsh conditions in the borders. In a sense they ruined their future and even the NLD of Suu Kyi kept them at a distance for reasons still unknown.

The current younger generation have perfected many sophisticated modern techniques and communication facilities to out manoeuvre the harsh restrictions placed by the Junta. (Incidentally the Army has issued orders to the media not to use the terms Junta or Regime while referring to the Army backed administration!)

But this time, it looks that the younger generation will continue with their fight staying within Myanmar- and carry on their silent resistance movement. But they have to contend with an Army that is known for its brutality and indiscriminate use of fire power against unarmed civilians!

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