**Myanmar Security Forces Take Aim at Anti-Coup Protesters**

Voice of America News

March 3, 2021

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/myanmar-security-forces-take-aim-anti-coup-protesters>

Several people died across Myanmar Wednesday after another day of demonstrations against the country’s military junta.

Reuters news agency says at least nine people have been killed, including five people in the central town of Monywa, quoting witnesses and media reports. Both Reuters and the Associated Press say a teenage boy was killed in the central city of Myingyan.

Meanwhile, Reuters and Agence France Presse say at least two people have been killed in the second-largest city of Mandalay, with AFP also reporting four other deaths in the Sagaing region.

Security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the crowds, with witnesses saying live ammunition was also used against the protesters. Several people were reportedly injured, among them reporter Htet Aung Khant with VOA’s Burmese service, who was hit by rubber bullets under his arm as he covered the protests.

Myanmar has been mired in chaos and violence since the military’s February 1 overthrow of the civilian government and the detentions of de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other high-ranking officials. More than 20 people across the country have been killed in the unrest, including 18 people last Sunday, according to the United Nations’ human rights office.

The escalating violence has drawn the scorn of Myanmar's regional neighbors and the international community at large. Members of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, held an informal meeting via videoconference Tuesday to discuss the situation with their Myanmar counterpart.

ASEAN’s chairman issued a statement after the meeting calling “on all parties concerned to seek a peaceful solution, through constructive dialogue, and practical reconciliation in the interests of the people and their livelihood.”

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi was far more direct, calling on the regime to restore the democratically-elected government.

"Restoring democracy back on track must be pursued," Marsudi said.

The United States and other Western nations have also demanded Suu Kyi’s release, as well as that of her lieutenants, and called on the junta to restore power to the civilian government.

The United Nations Security Council is expected to hold a closed door meeting on the situation in Myanmar on Friday.

The military has claimed widespread fraud in last November’s election, won in a landslide by Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy Party, as justification for last month’s coup. Myanmar’s electoral commission denied the military’s claims of election fraud.

Suu Kyi appeared via videoconference at a court in the capital, Naypyitaw, her first public appearance since she was removed from office and detained by the military.

She was charged with two additional crimes during the session — attempting to incite public unrest and violating a section of the telecommunications law regarding operating equipment without a license.

The 75-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate was already charged with illegally importing and using six unregistered walkie-talkie radios found during a search of her home, and for breaking the country’s natural disaster law by holding public gatherings in violation of COVID-19 protocols.

Her next court appearance has been scheduled for March 15.

Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said Monday during an address on state television that protest leaders and "instigators” would be punished. He said the army is also investigating financial abuse by the civilian government.

The junta has declared a one-year state of emergency.  Min Aung Hlaing has pledged that new elections will be held to bring about a "true and disciplined democracy” but did not specify when they would take place.