

# Bourgeois Democracy or Military Dictatorship in Myanmar?

## The Struggle for People's Democracy Must go on!

The people of Myanmar are currently defying military dictatorship. People, workers, and student leaders protested on the roads after the army seized power in Myanmar on February 1<sup>st</sup>. As a result, Army bullets ricocheted into their bodies. It is estimated that about 1000 civilians have died since February. But in reality this number may be higher. More than a hundred protesters were killed by the army in various parts of the country during the Armed Forces Day celebrations in



the national capital on March 27<sup>th</sup>. The next day, the army carried out air strikes with fanatical forces on minorities living on the Eastern border of the country. As part of the resistance, people stopped their duties and showed civil disobedience. According to 'The New York Times', national government operations were stagnated by 90%. Health workers, copper miners and Myanmar railway workers participated in the protest strike. In addition, 1,00,000 Myanmar teachers, seven teachers' unions, students and citizens participated in the protest. The army is trying to suppress this rebellion as much as possible.

Even if the people of Myanmar do not receive help from outside, the global democratic forces want their struggle in many forms to go on with greater consciousness to build a system that will stand up for the people and to the overthrow of military rule.

### What Happened in Myanmar?

Myanmar is a small country bordered by Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, China, and India in Southeast Asia. Myanmar is a group of many ethnic groups. 89.1% practice Buddhism, followed by 6.3% of Christianity and Islam with 2.3%.

It is clear that racial discrimination reigns in Myanmar with the genocide of the Rohingya by the army of Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under Myanmar's military rule or won the first election in 2015 with bourgeois democracy. Today, Myanmar's return to military rule has created political uncertainty. The people of Myanmar, who have seen decades of military dictatorship, are sacrificing their lives in various forms of protests and struggles against this military regime. The people of Myanmar have a duty to become more conscious to choose the true leadership to fight against military rule on behalf of the workers, peasant, and afflicted people.

### A) Military Regime :

After Myanmar gained self-rule from the British East India Company in 1948, non-Burmese races demanded for the self-government or federalism. It brought immense

pressure on government in 1962. At the same time, the military overthrew the ruling elite, seized control of the country, and continued its dictatorship for 50 years. In 1988, Burma was renamed Myanmar by the military government. Aung San Suu Kyi has been fighting against the military government since 1989, and the military government was dissolved in 2011 with the intervention of the United Nations and the international community. Elections were held for the first time in 2015, with the formation of a new constitution.

The military again now has recaptured Myanmar, detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the ruling party, backing the USDP's claim that the 2020 election was not transparent. The army has announced that it will form a two-year state of emergency and a new constitution and hold general elections.

#### **B) Aung San Suu Kyi :**

Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Aung San, the founder of the famous modern Burmese army. Her mother Khin Kyi worked as Burma's ambassador to India and Nepal in the 1960s. When Aung San Suu Kyi returned to Burma in 1988, she demonstrated against military dictatorship and called for a democratic government. At the same time, she founded the NLD party. She has gained immense popularity among the youth. She has been under house arrest for 15 years in her entire 21-year political career. At the same time, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Military rule was abolished in 2011 after the United Nations and the international community joined forces to fight Aung San Suu Kyi. She became the Prime Minister of Myanmar after the NLD party won the 2015 general election.

During her tenure as Prime Minister in 2017, the Myanmar military, along with local Buddhist monks, created carnage on Rohingya Muslims, which continues to this day. Seven lakh Rohingya minorities fled to Bangladesh during the genocide. In 2018, the Aung San Suu Kyi government removed 1.2 million Rohingya from the 2014 census and revoked their right to vote. When Aung San Suu Kyi appeared in court in 2019, she denied the charge of genocide, while the military that has captured Myanmar today is trying through the courts to keep her in jail for another decade in several corruption cases.

#### **C) Current Leader of Myanmar :**

Myanmar Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing took power through a military coup. He has had significant political influence as Myanmar has been moving towards democracy since 2011. He took over as Myanmar's commander in chief during the abolition of military rule in 2011. He announced military support to the opposition USDP party. He blocked the NLD party's efforts to amend the constitution and limit military power and ensured the 25 per cent of the seats in parliament. In 2017, the military intensified its crackdown on Rohingya minorities in the northern state. As a result, many Rohingya had to flee Myanmar, and the genocide-imposed sanctions on them.

In his first public statement after the uprising, he stated that "the military is on the side of the people, that the constitution is being drafted for a true and disciplined democracy, and that elections will be free and fair once the state of emergency is over." However, it was not clear when the emergency would end.

#### **D) Problem of Rohingyas :**

Rohingyas have been migrating to Myanmar since 1970. Their number is higher than the official figures. The government revoked the citizenship of 12 lakh Rohingyas and removed them from the 2014 census. Most of them live in Rakhine State. They have their own language and culture. They have been facing religious violence or military attacks for decades. In 2017 the army along with local Buddhist monks created carnage. The Medical Charities Medicine Frontier (MFS) reports that at least 6700 Rohingyas and 730 children under the age of 5 have died in a single month of violence. About seven lakh Rohingyas have fled across the Myanmar border into Bangladesh. The military also raped and tortured Rohingya women and girls.

A case was filed in the ICJ by the Gambia, a small Muslim-majority country in West Africa. The ICJ, however, has the power to inquire only into disputes between the states. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has approved the trial of Rohingyas as it has the power to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes and inhumane acts. Although Myanmar is not a member of the court, it said the case falls under its jurisdiction as the Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh is a Member. When Aung San Suu Kyi appeared in court in December 2019, she denied the allegations of genocide. The country's Independent Commission of Inquiry acknowledged serious human rights abuses but said there was no evidence of genocide. A full report on this has not yet been released.

#### **E) International Response :**

Western Nations are demanding that the United Nations Security Council impose wide sanctions on Myanmar. Russia and China, however, oppose such measures, even if they are permanent members of the Security Council. The United States has, as always, imposed sanctions on individuals and traders associated with the junta. Russia, the second-largest supplier of arms to the Myanmar military after China, has warned that sanctions are a negative factor. Representatives from seven Asian countries, including India, China, and Russia, attended the Armed Forces Day celebrations in Myanmar on March 27. Indian and Myanmar military organizations had close ties during the insurgency. India and China have been very careful in their public response to the military coup and have been dealt very strictly in providing shelter to people fleeing violence in Myanmar.

Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand have declared the developments in Myanmar as their "internal matter". Singapore is the largest investor in Myanmar. Japan, South Korea, and Thailand have also invested heavily in the country. These countries have been criticised the military takeover but have remained silent on imposing sanctions. Similarly, the largest trading partners China, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and India were reluctant to impose sanctions. The 2019 UN secret report reveals that China, Russia, as well as Ukraine, India and Israel are in the business of selling arms to the military general. Although these neighbouring countries have established diplomatic relations with the military government, its dictatorial nature will not change. Militarism is militarism.

Myanmar people must defeat the military dictatorship, and in the same case must not be limited to bourgeois democracy. The people must be prepared for the struggle to establish People's Democracy and the hegemony of the working class.