


From: Security Alert - International SOS <riskinsights@internationalsos.com>
Sent: 03 February 2021 21:15
To: Komal Churania
Subject: 0 travellers now - Advisory: Myanmar - Continue to monitor developments, minimise non-essential movement amid potential for unrest following military takeover of power (Revised)

Categories: ISOS


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Myanmar: Continue to monitor developments, minimise non-essential movement amid potential for unrest following military takeover of power (Revised)


OVERVIEW




Level: **Advisory**



Location: Myanmar



Category: Political unrest, Protest/Rally, Curfew, State of emergency, Transport disruption



Active: 03 Feb 2021 - 08 Feb 2021

Last Updated: 03 Feb 2021 15:40 (GMT)

The table below shows the number of impacted and potentially impacted individuals and assets at the date/time the alert was issued. The counts include individuals within the impact radius of the alert and may not reflect the total number of people in each area listed.

Please log into [Tracker](#) for the latest information or [click here](#) for an up-to-date list of affected individuals and assets in the impacted area.

EXPOSURE IN IMPACTED AREA ONLY				
Location	There Now	There in next 24 hours	There in next 1-7 days	There while the alert is active
Myanmar (Medium Risk)	0	0	0	0

TOTAL	0	0	0	0
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Managers and in-country staff should continue to monitor developments amid potential for unrest following the 1 February military takeover of power. Although no street demonstrations in support of the National League for Democracy (NLD) have occurred thus far, some public sector employees have launched a civil disobedience campaign in various parts of the country to denounce the military's actions. Unconfirmed reports on 3 February suggest that the military has charged former de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi of 'breaching import and export laws'. Such news has the potential to further escalate tensions among her supporters, especially if she is convicted. Any related gatherings could entail clashes with pro-military supporters and the security forces.

MORE DETAIL

Situation on the ground

The situation remains stable since the military's takeover of power from civilian rule. However, tensions will remain high over the coming days, especially amid news of alleged criminal charges against Aung San Suu Kyi, and could rise further if she is convicted. The military will likely release further NLD members in the coming days, as indicated by the recent release of several ministers and lawmakers. However, Aung San Suu Kyi, former president Win Myint and key leaders of the NLD party will likely remain under military arrest for a longer period. All related developments need to be closely monitored.

A heightened security presence will continue in major urban centres amid the ongoing one-year state of emergency, which was imposed on 1 February under article 417 of the 2008 Constitution. However, there are no roadblocks or checkpoints in major cities, including in Yangon and Mandalay cities. Major highways, including the Yangon-Mandalay highway, and bridges remain open. However, disruption to certain public services, as well as to business and commercial operations, can be expected due to ongoing civil disobedience campaigns.

A nationwide curfew **from 00.00 to 04.00** (local time) remains in place as part of COVID-19-related restrictions, during which people are only allowed to leave their residences for essential activities.

Protest activity

The NLD and its supporters have not announced any plans to hold street protests. Social media posts by NLD supporters are discouraging people from protesting in the streets due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Alternative forms of protests, such as clanging utensils and playing music from inside homes, have occurred.

Meanwhile, doctors, public sector workers and many senior government employees have launched a civil disobedience campaign to denounce the military's actions; reports indicate that 95 institutions from 35 cities are taking part in this campaign. Several healthcare workers on 2 February handed in their resignations from government services, a day after the health minister resigned from his position.

A gathering by supporters of the military will take place at [Uppatasanti Pagoda](#) in Naypyitaw on **4 February**. Several hundred people can be expected to participate, as seen during a similar pro-military march on 2 February from the Yangon Regional Parliament to Dagon Township in Yangon city. Most pro-military demonstrations have passed off peacefully, although a journalist was reportedly assaulted during one such gathering on 1 February near Yangon city's Sule Pagoda.

A statement by the NLD on 2 February urged the military to release the detained leaders and accept the election results. Earlier, statements purportedly from NLD leadership calling for protests circulated on social media, with some members vouching for its authenticity and others distancing themselves from the stance.

Nevertheless, such information – or misinformation – has the potential to provoke large protests, particularly in major cities in the NLD strongholds of Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Yangon regions. Potential protest locations in Yangon city include Sule Pagoda, Shwedagon Pagoda, Martyr's Mausoleum and Kyaik Ka San Sports Ground. All pro-NLD demonstrations will be met with a tough response from the security forces. Clashes with pro-military groups holding counter-demonstrations are also possible, particularly in Yangon city, Naypyitaw and Patheingyi (Ayeyarwady region).

Communications

Our in-country contacts have confirmed that internet and telephone services in Naypyitaw and Yangon city have largely been restored after they were temporarily suspended for several hours on 1 February. High-speed internet services have been restored in parts of in Rakhine and Chin states, where services were suspended in June 2019 amid conflict between rebel forces and the government. However, connections remain erratic and the services are liable to be suspended again with little notice, especially during times of escalated tensions and in locations where major protests break out. Broadcast services have similarly been disrupted.

Travel disruption

All commercial international flights have been suspended nationwide **until 30 April**, including at Yangon ([RGN](#)), Mandalay ([MDL](#)) and Naypyitaw ([NYT](#)) international airports. However, domestic and repatriation flights will resume **from 4 February**. Departing travellers are required to undergo a PCR test and present a COVID-19 negative health certificate dated no more than 72 hours prior to departure.

Most border crossings with neighbouring India, China and Thailand remain closed or tightly controlled due to ongoing COVID-19-related restrictions. Our

sources on the ground have confirmed that the second Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge checkpoint at Myawaddy (Kayin state) and Tak province (Thailand) has reopened following a temporary closure on 1 February. However, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the checkpoint remains open only to cargo trucks and Thai nationals crossing into Thailand, or Myanmar nationals crossing into Myanmar. Similarly, the crossings at Muse (Shan state) and Ruili (Yunnan province, China) remain open only to Chinese nationals entering from Myanmar.

Challenges around logistics and travel practicalities will remain a key concern during this period. Checkpoints are likely at entry and exit points of major cities such as Yangon city, Naypyitaw and Mandalay city. Entry restrictions related to COVID-19 remain in place in some areas, and the authorities may require valid documents before allowing people to enter certain locations, such as Yangon region. Movement within the country may be affected by short-notice road closures. The military may further increase security, block routes to certain cities, or even restrict movement within cities – especially to areas affected by protest activity. This will increase uncertainty around travel within the country **in the coming weeks**.

Essential services

Rumours have emerged around the discontinuation of 5,000 and 10,000 kyat banknotes, which have led to long queues at banks; ATMs not operating properly in some areas have also contributed to concerns. However, no disruption to banking operations have been noted since the temporary closure on 1 February. Supermarket operations are also normal, although longer than usual queues can be expected.

International response

International responses have been mixed. The UN Security Council was unable to agree on a statement on the issue in its emergency meeting on 2 February. In the Asia-Pacific region, China issued a statement 'noting' the developments and expressing hopes for a resolution to the differences between all sides. Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Philippines and Thailand issued similarly balanced statements. The US and UK governments, as well as the G7, have condemned the military takeover of the civilian government and urged the military to release the detained leaders.

Sanctions

The newly elected US administration also threatened to reimpose economic sanctions against Myanmar; several US-enforced economic sanctions were lifted in 2016. No other country has yet indicated potential sanctions.

Background

The latest developments follow weeks of tensions between the government and the military, with the latter demanding investigations into allegations of fraud during the November 2020 elections that saw the then-ruling NLD party win a second term. The military said it would hold new general elections after the state of emergency period ends. General Min Aung Hlaing has since assumed

power, while former vice-president Myint Swe has become the country's new president.

ASSESSMENT

Localised protests and counter-protests remain the primary concern in the coming days, although the immediate reaction by NLD supporters has thus far been muted. Conflicting information as to the veracity of Aung San Suu Kyi's alleged call for protests indicates a lack of unity and hesitation within the NLD leadership on how to proceed. Sentiment from social media suggests rising support for civil disobedience, which in the short term will likely manifest in non-violent, lesser-exposed activities – such as online campaigns and coordinated activities from home – given the military's presence in large cities and ability to quickly disperse gatherings. Any calls by NLD supporters to carry out protests on the streets will be met by pre-emptive arrests of organisers and key activists, further deterring the potential for widespread activity.

Nonetheless, escalatory triggers to monitor – and that may suggest a significant escalation driven by widespread unrest and ethnic violence – include:

- Confirmation of charges laid against Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD leadership;
- Further arrests of NLD supporters and/or activists;
- Strong calls for protests from the NLD and/or supporter groups on social media;
- Coordinated protest activity and organised gatherings;
- Widely circulated mis- or disinformation that stokes public anger;
- Clashes between NLD and pro-military activists, resulting in serious injury and/or death;
- Heightened curfew measures and movement restrictions;
- Substantial military deployment to support domestic policing and anti-protest activity;
- Prolonged communications blackouts;
- An increase in militant activity or related attacks in conflict-affected areas in Shan, Rakhine, Kachin and Chin states amid the military's focus on maintaining a strong presence and enforcing movement restrictions nationwide.

More broadly, while Myanmar in 2011 underwent substantial democratic reforms with civilian rule reinstated, the military retained significant political influence. In this sense, the latest developments do not indicate a major shift in the country's power dynamics, or in the nature of its security environment.

WHAT WE ADVISED YOUR PEOPLE

Inbound travellers

- International SOS maintains its standing advice to defer all travel to Myanmar due to restrictions related to COVID-19. Additionally, the driver for this advice now applies equally to the prevailing security situation, until otherwise indicated. This assessment is made jointly by our medical and security professionals.

In-country employees

- Minimise non-essential movement. Any essential movement should be conducted with robust risk assessment and after being discussed with management in accordance with your organisation's travel approval process. Before conducting any movement outside of major urban centres, seek a profile- and itinerary-specific risk assessment from security professionals to ensure appropriate precautions, taking into account the potential for short-notice imposition of restrictions on road movement, access to certain areas, and communications services.
- Expect heightened security on the streets and around government buildings, especially in the capital Naypyitaw, Yangon city (Yangon region) and Mandalay city (Mandalay region). Follow all official directives.
- Continue to monitor developments closely. All information circulating on social media and news channels should be verified via official and reliable sources.
- Be prepared for further short-notice disruption to telecommunications services. Maintain a list of emergency contacts, both electronically and on paper. Always keep copies with you. Register all contacts on your mobile phone. In case you do not have access to alternative means of communication, check your organisation's incident management protocol.
- Ensure you have sufficient cash and liaise with local contacts to ascertain which banks are operating for cash withdrawals.
- Ensure the ability to stand fast for at least one week with appropriate physical security measures, as well as access to secure accommodation, essential supplies (food, water and essential medication), fuel and communications devices. Ensure the ability to stand fast for longer periods in rural areas.
- While we do not assess there is a need to leave the country, international assignees wishing to depart should contact their embassy to inquire about the availability of repatriation flights, and coordinate plans with their organisation's management accordingly.

Advice for managers

- Closely monitor developments and triggers, which may require the enhancement of the current security arrangements.
- Ensure staff in Myanmar are supported and able to stand fast with appropriate physical security measures. Staff should have access to secure accommodation, essential supplies (food, water and essential medication), fuel and communications devices. Ensure the ability to stand fast for a period of at least one week, or longer in rural areas.
- Maintain the activation of crisis management and business continuity plans (BCP) protocols. Establish the approval protocol for movement and ensure in-country staff are aware of those protocols.

- Prepare for short-notice disruption to telecommunication services. Establish a communications protocol, including a cycle for regularly checking the status of in-country staff and the use of various modes of communication, as well as steps to be taken when communication is lost.
- Ensure relevant evacuation or escalation plans are ready to be implemented at short notice. Such plans should take into account COVID-19-related restrictions and the likely need to have a negative result of a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for commercial flights out of country, when they resume. Arrangements should be made to have a PCR test when safe to do so in liaison with local providers.
- Reconfirm the capabilities of local security and logistics providers, including the ability to support ground transport and any manned guarding arrangements.

Health advice from International SOS

- Obtain profile-specific advice prior to any travel, taking into account the extent to which your age and health may make you more vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus. Review the necessity of traveling against the potential risks.
- Do not travel if you are sick; travellers who are sick face the risk of being tested and quarantined. Monitor your health and seek medical attention if you develop flu-like symptoms, following the local procedure for your location.
- Pay strict attention to hygiene: Wash your hands frequently and carry hand sanitiser for use when soap and water are not readily available. Wear a mask whenever required to. Even if not required, consider wearing a mask if you have to go out in public.
- Avoid crowded places. In public areas, as much as possible, keep three to six feet (1-2 metres) away from others.

ASSISTANCE



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Call our medical and travel security specialists any time for advice and assistance before, during or after your trip. All 24-hour Assistance Centre phone numbers can be viewed [here](#).

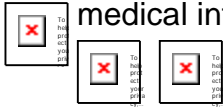
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