

My name is Myat Kaung Khant. I'm a final-year computer science student at the University of Information Technology in Myanmar. I will tell you the story of how I survived. My life was disastrous until I departed to the US. On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar Military staged a coup, detained our elected government officials, and seized the power against the will of citizens. But once people heard our democracy was taken, the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) emerged as a response to the military coup.

I joined the CDM movement to stand against oppression through peaceful resistance because I'm one of the people who love democracy. Most of the teachers in my University stand with CDM students but some stand with military. Our University President, who's standing for the military government didn't let my degree be issued. It was a disruption of my educational path to my career dream as a CDM student.

As the Civil Disobedient Movement was gaining momentum, mass protests happened quickly around the country. I even joined some protest groups in front of the Chinese embassy to stop supporting the military government. We protested peacefully but it took a tragic turn. The military government's forces responded to the peaceful protest with violence. They shot the peaceful protesters with real bullets. So, the mass protests became guerrilla protests to avoid the killings. I had to try my best to live and protest safely during these times. I gave my all for the funding to support the CDM teachers during those months. But the military government didn't just stand and watch us. They always tried to detain and torture the CDM students in all the ways they could.

On April 6, 2021, I was living in a hostel in Kyimyindaing Township for the next guerrilla protest happening there. But all of a sudden, the four military officers broke through my room's door, restrained me, and started searching my phone's contents. After that they asked me about our guerrilla protest leader's location. I told them that I didn't know anything but they couldn't accept that. They started beating my legs and punched me in the face without giving me any reason. After that, I was detained at Kyimyindaing Township Police Station. And they moved to the Insein Prison the next morning. They put me into a separate room and started interrogating me about the information of all the CDM teachers, fundraisers, and the guerrilla protest group I was in. I told them that I didn't know everything but they couldn't accept it. They told me violently that I was under arrest for supporting the unofficial government.

The Days in Prison are hellish for me. I was tortured both physically and mentally. I was slapped and drowned in the cold water often while being asked the same questions. One time, they punched me straight in my face so brutally that a piece of my

front tooth flew off. I didn't even get regular food and water. The cell where I was being put was also filthy and full of stinky smells. I had to endure all of these things wishing that I would see my mom and my sister one day.

But my wishes didn't come true. My mom already had a stroke for many years before the military coup. But it became worse after the military coup, her stroke became worse after she heard I was under arrest. On August 15, 2021, my mom passed away while I was still in prison. I didn't even have a chance to see her one last time. After hearing about my mom's death, my mental fortitude completely shattered. I was very sad and depressed that I couldn't do anything for my mom's funeral. My physical and mental state has been completely messed up ever since I was in jail. But I have to keep reminding myself that I had to stay strong for the freedom and democracy of our country.

Fortunately, On September 13, 2021, I was released from jail since they couldn't get any information from me. Even though My relatives were happy to see me when I got home, I was still in a depressed state that I lost my mom. In October 2021, I got in contact with my aunt from US. She was happy that I was released and felt sorry for the loss of my mother. She suggested I come to the United States and seek for asylum if I wanted to continue supporting the CDM teachers without any worries. That's when I made my life decision I took her suggestion and started trying to get to the United States in any way I could. So, I started applying for schools since November 2021. Unfortunately, another COVID wave happened and visa applications for the United States were closed so I had to wait until the US embassy reopened the applications.

But the military government couldn't just leave me alone. They always tried to track me down since they knew I supported the CDM teachers and the NUG government. So I had to relocate from place to place, town to town again every time I heard that they were trailing me. I was feeling really unsafe during these times. I was always feeling scared that I would get caught and sent to jail again. Luckily, I was accepted to City College in San Francisco, got my Visa on May 9, 2023, and moved to the United States on 20 July 2023 as an international student.

The worries and depression I've been feeling since the military coup was relieved when I stepped into the United States. The military coup destroyed my career dream, my educational path, my future, and the most important one, my family. I'll never forget how they killed our physical and mental lives without any kindness. I've decided not to go back to Myanmar because I'm sure that I'll be imprisoned and tortured brutally If I'm caught. That's why I'm seeking asylum for protection from the military government.

