

Garment workers union in Myanmar strike call

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YANGON - The Federation of Garment Workers Myanmar is one of nine leading trade unions calling for an extended general strike in the country to oppose the military coup.

Moe Sanda Myint, chair of the Federation of Garment Workers Myanmar who is said to be in hiding to avoid being arrested for leading a protest march in the country's largest city of Yangon, said she believed most workers would join the strike.

“We are urging to continue the strike until the dictatorship is uprooted,” said Moe Sanda Myint, as the nine unions released a joint statement calling for a “full, extended shutdown” of the country’s economy.

Garment workers have been at the heart of pro-democracy protests in Myanmar since the coup. Workers in other sectors, notably from the state railway and the banking sector, have also been highly visible.

Tens of thousands of people came out in protest yesterday (Sunday) in one of the biggest days of protest so far against the coup, despite overnight raids by security forces on pro-democracy activists.

Tensions were said to be running high in Yangon where gunshots could be heard in several areas after the 8pm curfew. More than 100 protesting students were reportedly arrested in the Shwepyitha neighbourhood of the city, and arrests were also made in other towns and cities, especially at universities.

Videos posted on social media showed police firing teargas and stun grenades to break up protests in Lashio in the country's northern Shan region. Police also opened fire on protesters in the historic temple town of Bagan, according to witnesses, but it wasn't clear whether or not they were using live ammunition.

The United Nations says security forces have killed more than 50 people since daily protests began after the military overthrew and detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi on 1 February.

A coalition of trade bodies and multi-stakeholder initiatives last week released a [joint statement](#) calling for international action to protect Myanmar's half a million garment workers who have been pictured on social media protesting the coup.

It was signed by the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA), Amfori, ETI Sweden, Ethical Trading Initiative, Ethical Trade Norway, Fair Labor Association, Fair Wear Foundation, German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, and Initiative for Compliance and Sustainability.

Days earlier, [workers' rights campaigners](#) published a statement urging fashion brands and retailers to condemn the coup, while last month a coalition of [17 trade unions and NGOs](#) released a similar joint statement.