

Garment workers join Myanmar protests

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Photo: Andrew TS/Twitter

MYANMAR - Garment workers are reportedly at the centre of ongoing protests against the military coup in Myanmar where demonstrators are calling for the restoration of democracy.

Thousands are taking part in a third day of demonstrations in major cities, including the capital Nay Pyi Taw and biggest city Yangon, against the seizing of power by the military.

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), which campaigns for the rights of workers in the fashion and textiles industry, quoted local union activists as saying that garment workers had been staging protests in their factories and on the streets.

"We condemn the military coup in Myanmar and strongly urge all political leaders and military officials to respect the 2020 election results and restore the democratic process," said a CCC statement.

One union organiser, calling himself 'Andrew TS', posted a photograph on Twitter with the caption: "Myanmar garment workers protested the coup inside factories across Yangon today, here giving the three-finger symbol of the resistance."

Adopted from the Hunger Games films, the three-fingered salute has become a symbol of resistance and solidarity for democracy movements in South-East Asia.

Other posts showed garment workers - many of them wearing red ribbons, another symbol of resistance - including members of the Federation of Garment Workers Myanmar (FGWM) marching through the streets alongside pro-democracy protesters.

Another tweet from 'Andrew TS' said: "Young women factory workers in Myanmar, union garment workers, marching against the military coup. This is who took the 1st stand in the streets yesterday, and the ppl responded hitting the streets by the thousands."

Workers at the Jewoo Garment Factory in Yangon's Thakayta Industrial Zone were also pictured wearing red ribbons inside their factory.

Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party (NLD) is backing the growing civil disobedience movement, promising to support any workers who are fired for taking part in the anti-coup campaign.

"State sovereignty and the people's power have been taken away through unlawful means," the NLD said in a statement. "They have to be restored through peaceful, non-violent and disobedient means."

Some estimates put the number of protesters in Yangon at 100,000 and there were reports of large demonstrations in other cities condemning the coup.

The military, which has declared a year-long state of emergency in Myanmar, claims - without offering any evidence - that the election won by the NLD in November was fraudulent.