
Myanmar, protests across the country. The Bishop of Mandalay shows his support to the people with the three-finger salute

Catholics peacefully joined in the protests of the people of Myanmar. Bishops, nuns and priests were also present yesterday, expressing their support with the three-finger salute - the index, middle and ring fingers - which stems from the popular Hunger Games movies, adopted as a symbol of pro-democracy demonstrators in Myanmar. While thousands of protesters took to the streets again yesterday in cities across the country, in Yangon, Mandalay and Monywa, the Catholic communities of Myanmar gathered for a special Sunday prayer for peace. Catholics in all dioceses responded to the appeal of the bishops and attended Holy Mass, offered prayers and fasted for the return of democracy after the military coup, for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners, and for the end of military rule. Young protesters took to the streets in Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, on motorbikes and vehicles. The city's archbishop, Msgr. **Marco Tin Win**, was there to greet the protesters, together with priests and nuns, showing support with the three-finger salute. Young people held National League for Democracy (NLD) flags, also holding banners reading "Down with the military dictatorship", "Let the military government fail" and "Democracy wins".

<https://twitter.com/CardinalMaungBo/status/1358659080563216384> Cardinal **Charles Bo**, Archbishop of Yangon and President of the Bishops' Conference, tweeted yesterday: "Youth is a flame. Youth is a fire. When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, he sent tongues of burning fire to the apostles who were young men. Youth are like the wind which "blows where it wishes" (John 3:8). Let us pray for a new Pentecost, for the dawn of a new life in Myanmar." Quoting John Paul II's post-synodal exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, he added: "The lay faithful cannot remain indifferent, or be strangers and inactive in the face of all that denies and compromises peace, namely, violence and war, torture and terrorism, concentration camps, militarization of public life, the arms race.." His Eminence wrote, posting photos of the religious who took to the streets throughout the country: "In unity....We stand with our people! We support non-violence protesters! We stand for peace!"

<https://twitter.com/CardinalMaungBo/status/1358660905085538306> **Pope Francis' prayer.** While the protests were flaring up in the country, Pope Francis turned his thoughts to the people of Myanmar after the Angelus prayer in St. Peter's Square: "In this most delicate moment I wish to again assure my spiritual closeness, my prayer and my solidarity to the people of Myanmar. And I pray that those who hold responsibility in the country will place themselves with sincere willingness at the service of the common good, promoting social justice and national stability, for a harmonious and democratic coexistence. Let us pray for Myanmar." **The voice of the Churches in Asia and throughout the globe.** The coup has been unanimously condemned by all nations, including the United Nations and the European Union. Diplomatic efforts are being made to restore the rule of law and release all political prisoners. Christian leaders in Asia and beyond have expressed solidarity with the people of Myanmar as they condemned the coup. "It is with profound concern that we follow the current developments in your country, especially the abrupt resumption of military rule, overturning the outcome of elections on 8 November 2020, as well as the detention of key political and pro-democracy representatives and the escalation of the national situation to the state of emergency", reads a letter signed by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian Conference of Asia. *"We urge a swift and peaceful return to the path of democracy, and appeal for the human rights and freedoms – including the freedom of religion or belief – of all Myanmar's people to be fully respected and protected."*