

Myanmar military junta arrests prominent trade union leader

Daw Myo Aye, labour organiser and a leader of civil disobedience protests, dragged from office by army

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Soldiers in Yangon patrolling the streets by night. Thousands of people have been arrested and hundreds killed since the military junta seized power. Photograph: AFP/Getty

One of Myanmar's leading trade union leaders has been arrested as part of escalating attacks on pro-democracy figures by the military junta.

Daw Myo Aye, director of Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar (STUM), one of Myanmar's largest independent unions, is a central figure in the movement for workers' rights.

She has been one of the most prominent union leaders in the civil disobedience movement, which has been organising national strikes and protests since the military seized power from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February.

Myo Aye was dragged from her office by the army last Thursday and taken to a police station where she has been charged and detained. According to the union, she is due to be transferred to a prison in Yangon.



Daw Myo Aye, director of Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar, who has been arrested

“We lost our pillar,” said a member of staff at STUM. “But ... we are going to operate with the remaining staff. We operate within the law and we provide assistance to workers in accordance with the labour law. Our organisation will not collapse because she is not here.”

Thousands of people have been arrested and hundreds killed since protests against the military junta began. According to the [latest figures from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners \(Burma\)](#), 737 people have been killed by the military, and 3,229 individuals are detained or have been sentenced. Chue Thwel, Daw Myo Aye’s daughter, said: “Since the beginning of the coup on 1 February, I thought they would come for her ... I feel they arrested her to set an example.”

A spokesperson for the Worker Rights Consortium, a labour rights monitoring organisation, said: “With many labour leaders already in hiding or exile, the military’s arrest of Daw Myo Aye poses a serious challenge to the vital role of the Myanmar labour movement in the struggle to restore democracy.”